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ANCIENT  
EGYPTIAN  
REPRESENTATIONS  
OF TURTLES

Henry G. Fischer

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From left to right and top to bottom, the numbers of these pieces in the catalogue in Section 3 are:  
63, 58, 92, 56, 57, 55, 48, 47

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Papers No. 13

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

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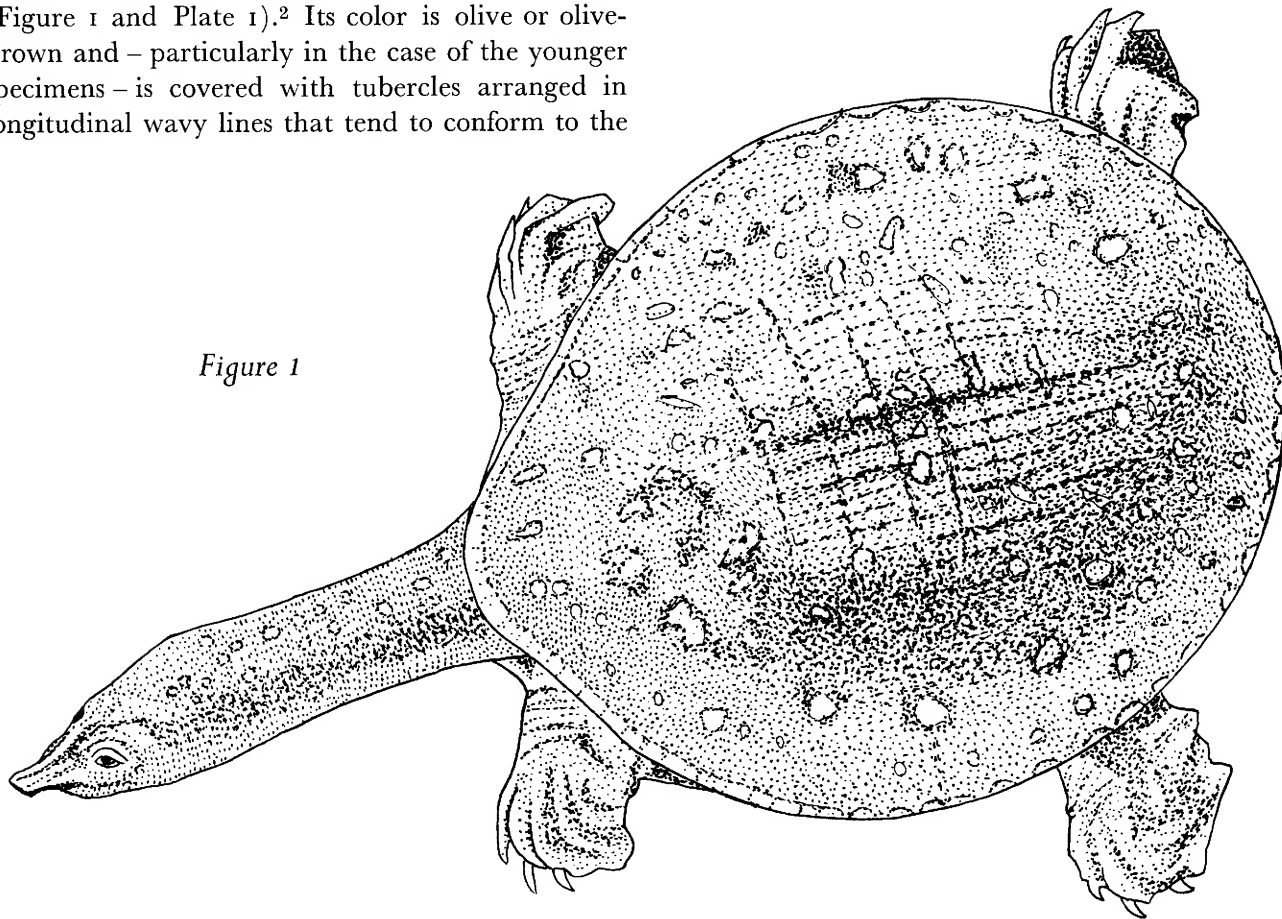
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# I Trionyx in Ancient Egypt

Like most of the fauna of ancient Egypt, the three-clawed water turtle *Trionyx triunguis* is seldom encountered in the lower reaches of the Nile today, having retreated southward to the less populated area of Nubia and the Sudan.<sup>1</sup> It is found throughout the other river systems of Africa, however, and both in its appearance and habits, this species closely resembles the *Trionyx ferox* and *Trionyx spinifer* of North America, which have often received the appropriate name of “flapjack.” Its carapace is, in fact, almost circular and only slightly domed in the center (Figure 1 and Plate 1).<sup>2</sup> Its color is olive or olive-brown and – particularly in the case of the younger specimens – is covered with tubercles arranged in longitudinal wavy lines that tend to conform to the

curved contour of the shell as they near the edges; there is also a profusion of dark-rimmed white dots. (In contrast, the back of the more familiar land tortoise, in Egypt represented by *Testudo kleinmanni*, illustrated in Plate 2,<sup>3</sup> is higher and more elongated, and displays a characteristic reticulated pattern formed by three longitudinal rows of large hexagonal plates.) The underside of *Trionyx* is fleshy and white, incorporating a short plastron that does not permit the legs to be retracted out of sight. One of its most

Figure 1





<sup>1</sup> The same subject has been dealt with more briefly, and in a somewhat lighter vein, in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 24 (1965/66), pp. 193–200. For the zoological aspect I have principally consulted the second edition of *Die Lurche und Kriechtiere* (Brehm's Tierleben I) by Alfred Brehm, revised by Franz Werner, pp. 488–497, and *Reptilia and Batrachia* (*Zoology of Egypt* I) by John Anderson, pp. 32–34. In addition, I have consulted A. F. Carr, *Handbook of Turtles*, and have been able to discuss some points with Herndon G. Dowling, Curator of Reptiles at the New York Zoological Park, and Richard G. Zweifel of the American Museum of Natural History, to whom I wish to express my thanks. I am also indebted to many of my colleagues for

their help in supplying photographs and data, particularly John D. Cooney, Eiddon Edwards, Adolf Klasens, Herman De Meulenaere, Hans Wolfgang Müller, Richard Nicholls, Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt, Harry Smith, Edward Terrace, Nicholas Thomas, Baudouin van de Walle, Stefan Wenig, and Constant De Wit.

<sup>2</sup> The figure is redrawn from one of Brehm's illustrations. The plate is from J. Anderson, *Reptilia and Batrachia* (*Zoology of Egypt* I), Pl. 3: a young female specimen.

<sup>3</sup> Also known as *Testudo leithii*; J. Anderson, *Reptilia and Batrachia* (*Zoology of Egypt* I), Pl. 2.

striking features is the long tubular nose that it protrudes above the water when it breathes, as though it were sipping air through a pair of straws. Even so furtive an emergence is only occasionally necessary, however, for a gill-like apparatus in the throat enables the animal to remain completely submerged for as long as ten hours at a time. Furthermore, it prefers darkness, leading a nocturnal existence.<sup>4</sup> These turtles feed principally on other small reptiles, batrachians, and fish, which they catch by awaiting their prey or by swimming slowly up to it, then lashing out their long necks with extraordinary rapidity and seizing the victim with razor-sharp jaws. The female is about twice the size of the male, and fully grown specimens have been known to attain the formidable length of four feet, or 120 centimeters.<sup>5</sup> It is easy to believe that such monsters are capable of devouring young crocodiles.

served as food in predynastic settlements along the Nile, and it apparently continued to form part of the diet of the ancient Egyptians at least as late as the second half of the third millennium B.C., during the Old Kingdom.<sup>8</sup> By that time, however, the turtle may long since have been regarded with a certain amount of suspicion and hostility – a combination of misgivings that perhaps were initially caused by the predatory habits that have incurred ill will toward his American counterpart, but to a greater extent were inspired by the mystery of his shadowy underwater existence. And while the first of these causes would not have decreased the popularity of *Trionyx* as food, the second undoubtedly did have such an effect, for one of the earliest references to the animal in Egyptian literature, a funerary spell of the Middle Kingdom, clearly intimates that its flesh is an abomination to the god Re. Designed to protect the deceased from having to eat excrement in the next world, the spell concludes:  “If you tell me to eat this, then Re will eat turtle!”<sup>9</sup> In part, this stigma may derive from the fact that the turtle was classified as a kind of fish, as shown by the presence of the fish-determinative () at the end of its name in the

4 A. Brehm, *Die Lurche und Kriechtiere (Brehms Tierleben I)*, p. 490. According to A. F. Carr, *Handbook of Turtles*, p. 428, an equal predilection for warmth has been observed to induce at least one of the related American species to bask in shallow depths that are heated by the sun, and it seems likely that the same motive might occasionally tempt the Egyptian turtle to rise to the surface in the course of the day.

6 Gerald Durrell, *The Overloaded Ark* (Penguin Books, 1953), p. 221.

8 L. Keimer in *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 32 (1949/50), p. 93. For prehistoric evidence: J. de Morgan, *Recherches sur les origines de l'Égypte* II, p. 99 (Tukh); H. Junker, *Bericht über die Westdelta Expedition*, p. 50 and Pl. 17 (b); "Vorläufiger Bericht . . Merimde-Benisalâme" in *Anzeiger der Wiener Akademie* (phil.-hist. Kl.) (1929), p. 218; F. Debono, "El-Omari" in *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 48 (1948), p. 567; A. J. Arkell, *Sheheinab*, p. 11; A. J. Arkell, *Early Khartoum*, p. 18; G. Brunton, *Mostagedda*, pp. 24, 30, 57 (and cf. undated remains pp. 146-147); O. Menghin and M. Amer, *Excavations of the Egyptian University in the Neolithic Site at Maadi, First Preliminary Report (Season 1930-31)*, p. 52. Keimer suggests that the carapaces found in tombs by Zaki Saad at Helwan and by Junker at Giza might possibly be shields, rather than the remains of offerings; see Z. Saad, *Royal Excavations at Saqqara and Helwan (1941-1945)*, pp. 108-109 and Pl. 47; H. Junker, *Giza* VIII, p. 117. Further Old Kingdom evidence is available, however, and the cases are sufficiently numerous to make Keimer's suggestion seem highly unlikely, although a complete carapace may sometimes have served as some kind of implement: G. Reisner, *Naga-ed-Dêr* III, p. 158; unpublished Naga ed-Deir burial.

9 A. de Buck, *Coffin Texts* V, p. 30 (Spell 368), example B1C. For a fuller discussion of this and many other matters that are mentioned in the following paragraphs, see B. van de Walle, 'La Tortue dans la religion et la magie égyptiennes' in *La Nouvelle Cléo* 5 (1953), pp. 173-189. The Coffin Texts are dealt with on pp. 178-179.

passage just quoted, and the fact that fish were considered to be impure (cf. end of footnote 8). But it was doubtless the shadowy and secretive aspect of the turtle's existence that most directly put it into opposition with the sun god, and made it particularly dangerous to Re when the god was obliged to journey beneath the Nile at night.

The role of the dark antagonist of the sun god is more concretely formulated in the New Kingdom, when inscriptions on coffins frequently declare, "May Re live and may the turtle die" (Figure 2) – the force of each of these wishes being dependent upon the other.<sup>10</sup> In one case the words accompany a Nineteenth Dynasty tomb painting in which the hapless animal is being harpooned by the deceased (Figure 3), while an adjacent scene shows the same weapon used to dispatch a more redoubtable embodiment of evil – the hippopotamus.<sup>11</sup>

If it seems probable that religio-magical considerations denied Egyptians the pleasure of eating

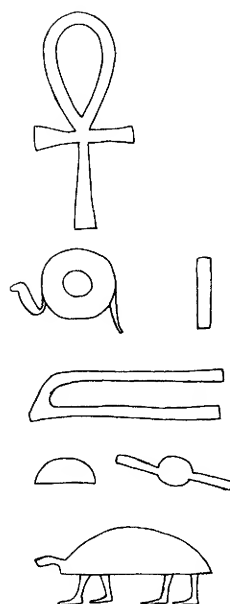


Figure 2

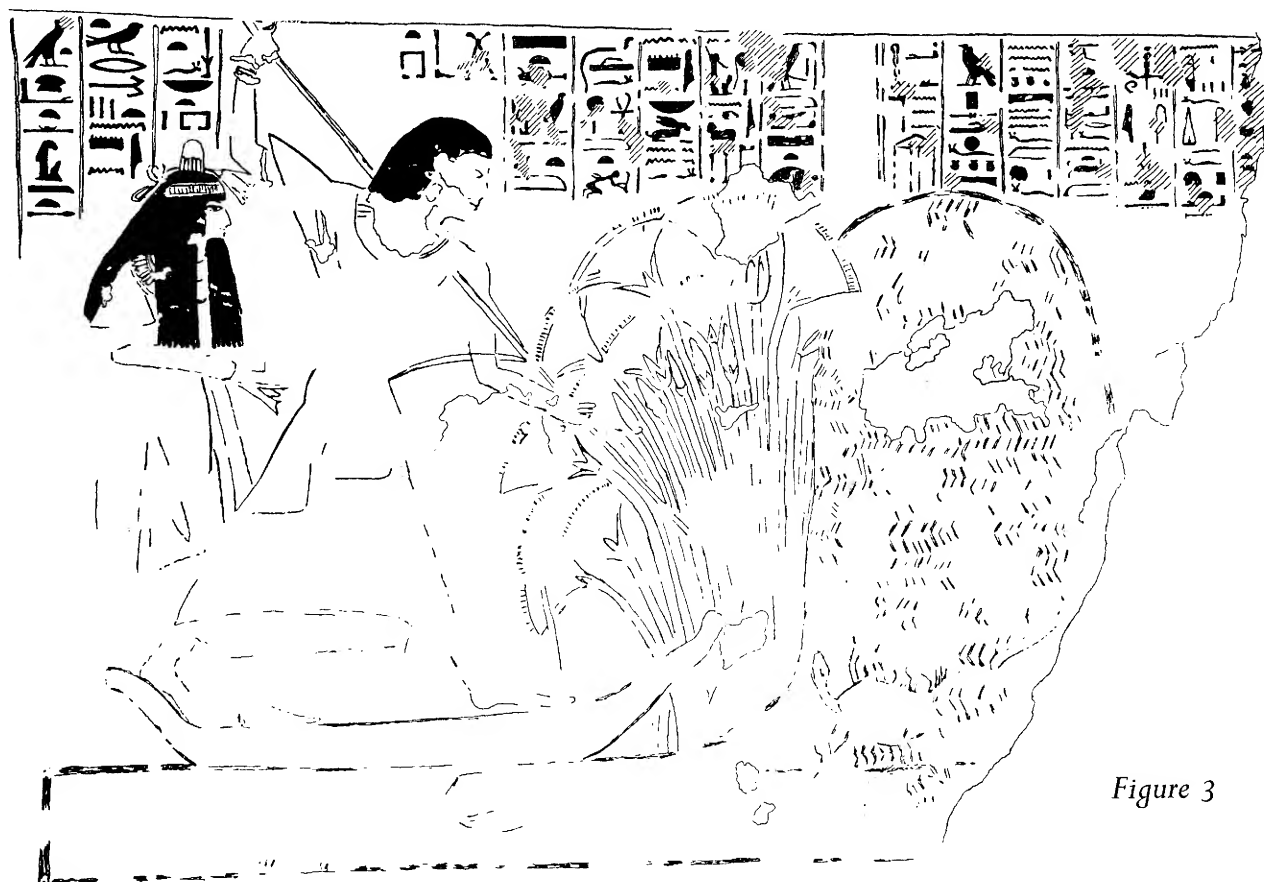



Figure 3

<sup>10</sup> B. van de Walle in *La Nouvelle Cléo* 5 (1953), p. 180, nn. 1–2. For additional examples see W. M. F. Petrie, *Qurneh*, p. 12, Pl. 30 (5), where the turtle determinative appears to have had its neck broken (  ), and A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, IV, Belegstellen to p. 557, no. 4. Figure 2 is taken from G. Brunton and R. Engelbach, *Gurob*, Pl. 32; this is particularly interesting because the turtle-hieroglyph shows the carapace in profile, not


viewed from above as is usually the case. The formula is actually a conjuration in favor of the deceased, which in the example illustrated takes the following form: "(As) Re may live and (as) the turtle may die, (so) may he who is in the sarcophagus be sound."

<sup>11</sup> Theban tomb 157; T. Säve-Söderbergh, "Eine ramessidische Darstellung vom Töten der Schildkröte" in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 14 (1956), pp. 175–180.



Trionyx by the end of the third millennium, little or no reluctance was felt in using the shell and internal organs of turtles for medical purposes during the Middle Kingdom, but it is significant that these remedies were never taken internally.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately the medical texts do not identify the animal's habitat, whether land, river, or sea.<sup>13</sup> The plates of the salt-water turtle (most probably *Chelonia imbricata* from the Red Sea) were utilized in the manufacture

<sup>12</sup> The evidence is conveniently summarized by H. von Deines and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Drogenamen* (*Grundriss der Medizin der alten Ägypter* VI), pp. 508–509. G. Keller, *Antike Tierwelt* II, p. 248, notes that the Greeks and Romans likewise eschewed the turtle as food but used various parts of it for medicine.

<sup>13</sup> Even the most detailed examples of the hieratic determinative (e.g.  in Papyrus Ebers 86, 12) do not settle this point, for Trionyx would probably appear in the writing of *štw* regardless of its application as a generic term.

<sup>14</sup> In many cases bracelets have been identified as horn when the material is evidently turtle shell, or the choice between these two alternatives is left in doubt; such cases are marked with an asterisk (\*) in the following list. The bracelets were generally fashioned from thin strips cut from the length of individual plates and then bent into the form of a circle or crescent, the tapering ends of which sometimes overlap, but were probably never welded together (examples 2, 3, 5, 10–12, 18, 19, 21). The “C Group” bracelets (16, 18) are sometimes heavier. A much wider (i.e. more tubular) type of bracelet, usually described as horn, is also known from the Archaic Period (6–8); some of these examples are made of segments that are laced together by means of leather thongs or copper wire.

#### PRE- AND PROTODYNASTIC BRACELETS:

- (1) G. Brunton and G. Caton-Thompson, *The Badarian Civilisation*, p. 30 (one bracelet and two finger rings, none illustrated).
- (2) G. Brunton, *Mostagedda*, pp. 53\* (?), 55\*, 88, and Pl. 40 (tomb 1876).
- (3) A. Lansing, “The Egyptian Expedition, 1934–35: The Museum’s Excavations at Hierakonpolis” in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 30 (1935), Sect. II, p. 42 and p. 43, Fig. 10; tomb H32 yielded MMA 35.7.47–49 and Cairo J. d’E. 65395 as well as Naqada II decorated ware (red paint on buff).
- (4) W. M. F. Petrie and J. E. Quibell, *Naqada and Ballas*, pp. 14\*, 47\* (no illustration).
- (5) H. Junker, *Bericht über die Grabungen auf den Friedhöfen von El-Kubanieh-Süd*, pp. 96–97 and Fig. 55.
- (6) W. M. F. Petrie, *Royal Tombs II*, Pl. 44 (23)\*.
- (7) W. M. F. Petrie, *Tarkhan I*, 22\*, Pl. 2 (12–16).
- (8) H. Junker, *Turah*, p. 59\* and p. 58\*, Fig. 82 (same form as preceding; for the material cf. Junker’s statement in reference no. 5 above).
- (9) D. Randall-MacIver and A. C. Mace, *El Amrah and Abydos*, p. 27 (not illustrated).
- (10) Z. Saad, *Royal Excavations at Helwan (1945–1947)*, p. 28\* and Pl. 27 (b).
- (11) G. Reisner, *Archaeological Survey of Nubia: Report for 1907–1908 I*, p. 41 and Pl. 66 B (17–18).

#### OLD KINGDOM BRACELETS:

- (12) G. Brunton, *Mostagedda*, p. 110\* and Pl. 63 (15).
- (13) G. Brunton, *Qau and Badari I*, pp. 31\*, 66\* (tomb 4837).
- (14) W. M. F. Petrie, *Diospolis Parva*, p. 38 (§56).

of various implements and ornaments, particularly knife handles and bracelets (Plate 2),<sup>14</sup> while the high-domed carapace of the land tortoise served as a convenient receptacle or as a sounding board for lutes – a device that is also well known from ancient Greece.<sup>15</sup> Such objects continued to be made as late as the New Kingdom, and were even placed in tombs, apparently without fear of jeopardizing the solar hereafter of the deceased. Nothing is known about

#### MIDDLE KINGDOM KNIFE HILTS:

- (15) G. Reisner, *Kerma IV–V*, pp. 188–189 and Pl. 50 (1). The grip is made of turtle shell, the butt of ivory; the turtle-shell grip possibly occurs in some of the Egyptian examples where the material is described as “horn” (see W. Wolf, *Die Bewaffnung des altägyptischen Heeres*, p. 102 and Pl. 13).

#### “C GROUP” BRACELETS:

- (16) G. Wainwright, *Balabish*, pp. 10, 32, 51 and Pls. 3 (2, 2), 12 (10).
- (17) C. M. Firth, *Archaeological Survey of Nubia: Report for 1908–1909*, pp. 82–86, 126, 172, 174 and Pl. 37c (8–9).
- (18) H. Junker, *Bericht über die Grabungen auf den Friedhöfen von El-Kubanieh-Nord*, pp. 85, 120.

#### NEW KINGDOM BRACELETS:

- (19) G. Brunton, *Mostagedda*, p. 130 and Pl. 74 (3aa).
- (20) H. Junker, *Bericht über die Grabungen auf den Friedhöfen von El-Kubanieh-Nord*, p. 161.
- (21) E. R. Ayrton, *Abydos III*, p. 50 and Pl. 17 (11).

#### OTHER NEW KINGDOM OBJECTS (see also footnote 15):

- (22) Turtle-shell bowl in form of turtle: D. Randall-MacIver and A. C. Mace, *El Amrah and Abydos*, p. 89 and Pl. 47.
- (23) Comb: D. Randall-MacIver and A. C. Mace, *El Amrah and Abydos*, p. 88 and Pl. 46 (upper left).
- (24) “Toilet Articles in . . . Tortoise Shell”: T. Whittemore’s brief description of finds from Sawama in G. Wainwright, *Balabish*, p. v. Cf. T. Whittemore in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* I (1914), p. 247, where the objects concerned are simply termed “scales of tortoise shell.” Presumably these are parts of carapaces that served as bowls or dishes.

<sup>15</sup> Cairo Cat. 69420: H. Hickmann, *Instruments de musique* (*Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*), p. 160 and Pls. 97–98. This specimen comes from the Theban necropolis: B. Bruyère, *Fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1934–1935)* II, p. 116; on p. 117 Bruyère notes that other fragments of tortoise shell were found in circumstances that indicated that they belonged to similar instruments. BM 38171: *British Museum Guide to the Third and Fourth Egyptian Rooms* (1904), p. 173; I. E. S. Edwards has kindly had the carapace examined by Miss Grandison of the London Natural History Museum, and she concluded that it was somewhat less domed than would be expected of *Testudo kleinmanni* but that it apparently derives from that species. For the use of the tortoise carapace as a sounding board in ancient Greece, see G. Keller, *Antike Tierwelt* II, pp. 248–249; he mentions an example in the Athens museum that is apparently of Egyptian workmanship, and believes that the Greeks may have borrowed this idea from the same source, citing the tradition that it was in Egypt that Hermes found the desiccated turtle from which he made his lyre. The carapace of *Testudo kleinmanni* was also used as a bowl in a scribe’s kit: Carnarvon and H. Carter, *Five Years’ Explorations at Thebes*, p. 76 and Pl. 66.

the Egyptians' attitude toward either the sea turtle or land tortoise, but it seems likely that they shared much of the ignominy that befell their Nilotic cousins. However this may be, the fresh-water turtle claimed – for better or worse – a predominant share of attention. None of these species was very frequently represented during the Dynastic Period, but when the subject does appear, it nearly always proves to be Trionyx. The only exception of which I am reasonably certain is a New Kingdom sketch on a flake of stone excavated at Thebes (Plate 2),<sup>16</sup> which evidently may be identified as Testudo. As far as I have been able to determine, the salt-water turtle was never depicted in Egyptian art.





While representations of turtles in tomb and temple reliefs are particularly uncommon, they are included among the numerous fauna shown in reliefs from the Fifth Dynasty sun temple of Neuserre (Figure 4a),<sup>17</sup> at least two further instances (Figure 4b, c) are known from private tomb chapels of the Old and Middle Kingdoms, respectively,<sup>18</sup> and a surprising number of examples derive from the New Kingdom. The reliefs of the Eighteenth Dynasty temple of Hatshepsut, for example, include two turtles among the fauna of the Red Sea coast of Punt, in the region of Somaliland, both of which clearly show the long snout of the fresh-water Trionyx (Figure 4c, f).<sup>19</sup> A private tomb decorated in the same reign shows

Trionyx in the waters of the Nile, beneath a skiff in which the deceased is fowling (Figure 4d).<sup>20</sup> In all of these reliefs the animal is swimming freely about, and is neither being caught for food nor attacked as an enemy. The same may be true of two further examples in Nineteenth Dynasty tombs (one in Figure 4g), but in both cases the context is incomplete and one of the examples is by no means certain.<sup>21</sup> The Nineteenth Dynasty harpooning scene previously mentioned is the earliest known to depict the turtle as a creature that is ritually exterminated; this motif is otherwise found only in the Greco-Roman temples of Edfu, Esna, and Philae, but the turtle also appears among the various maleficent creatures that have been vanquished by means of a magical battue on Late Dynastic stelae invoking the protective power of the demon Harmerti or the plague goddess Sakhmet.<sup>22</sup>

It is in the light of the gradually declining popularity of the turtle that the most abundant class of evidence must be interpreted – the representation of Trionyx in and on a number of small objects including palettes, vessels, and figurines of the Pre- and Protodynastic Periods, amulets of the Old Kingdom and later (Frontispiece), and various magical devices of the Middle Kingdom.<sup>23</sup> It seems likely that in nearly all these cases the turtle is enlisted as an ally against the dangers that his species evoked. This is certainly true of the magical knives of the Middle

16 J. Vandier-d'Abbadie, *Catalogue des ostraca figurés de Deir el Médineh*, p. 180 (no. 2828) and Pl. 114.

17 I am indebted to S. Wenig for supplying a drawing of the fragment that is illustrated here in advance of the final publication of the "Weltkammer" reliefs. The number of the fragment is 726 and the section reproduced is only 9 cm. long.

18 The Sixth Dynasty tomb of *Mḥw* at Saqqara: Z. Saad in *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 40 (1940–1941), p. 690 and p. 688, Fig. 75; the Twelfth Dynasty tomb of *Wḥ-ḥtp*: A. Blackman, *Meir* III, Pl. 7. L. Keimer in *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 32 (1949/50), p. 91, speaks of representations "dans plusieurs mastabas de l'Ancien et du Moyen Empire," but mentions only these two; the first is illustrated in his Fig. 21, p. 92, and the second (a rather rough copy of Blackman's drawing) appears in his Fig. 22, p. 93. Note also the Fifth Dynasty turtle hieroglyph cited by G. Möller, *Paläographie* I, no. 239; the origin of this is not known to me (unless it is the fragment illustrated in my Figure 4a), and the Sixth Dynasty hieratic equivalent from *Hieratische Papyrus aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin* III, Pl. 7 (Strasbourg Da) is somewhat uncertain because it is incomplete and lacking in context. Another alleged hieroglyphic example, a name transcribed as  in L. Borchardt, *Denkmäler des Alten Reiches* II, p. 87 (Cairo Cat. 1616), is actually the familiar  'Iny (cf. H. Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen* I, p. 33, 10). A more perplexing hieroglyphic representation of the turtle occurs on the back of one of the Eighteenth Dynasty statues of Sakhmet from the temple of Mut at Karnak; according to W. Helck (*Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums* IV, p. 1766, 9) one of the epithets of this goddess is  ; his copy evidently derives from K. Sethe (*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache* 58 [1923], p. 44) who shows  with the remark

"Schildkröte (?)." The turtle is not usually represented in profile view, however (as stated earlier, my Figure 2 is an exception), and the form given by Sethe is not wholly convincing.

19 E. Naville, *Deir el Bahri* III, Pl. 69 and *Fremdvölkerexpedition* photographs 570, 572. The presence of Trionyx would suggest that the Puntite settlement was located at the mouth of a river, although it is also possible that the Egyptian artist inaccurately represented an alien species in a familiar form. Here it may be noted that the product represented at the lower left of Naville's Pl. 78 is not tortoise shell as has sometimes been claimed; see J. Harris, *Lexicographical Studies*, pp. 133–134.

20 Theban tomb 125; the figure is drawn from a photograph, MMA neg. T. 3492.

21 Theban tomb 215: J. Vandier-d'Abbadie and G. Jourdain, *Deux Tombes de Deir el-Médineh* (*Mémoires, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 73), p. 30 and Pl. 20. Theban tomb 217: Norman de G. Davies, *Two Ramesside Tombs*, p. 74 and Pl. 42 (fragment 53), traces that Davies identifies as a turtle:



22 Most of this material is discussed by B. van de Walle in *La Nouvelle Cléo* 5 (1953), pp. 180–187, and some aspects of it will be dealt with in the following pages, at the end of the next section.

23 For details see the list provided below in Section 3. Some of this material is presumably considered by H. Altenmüller in his forthcoming work *Die Apotropaia und die Götter Mittelägyptens* (*Ägyptologische Forschungen* 24), which I have not yet been able to consult.

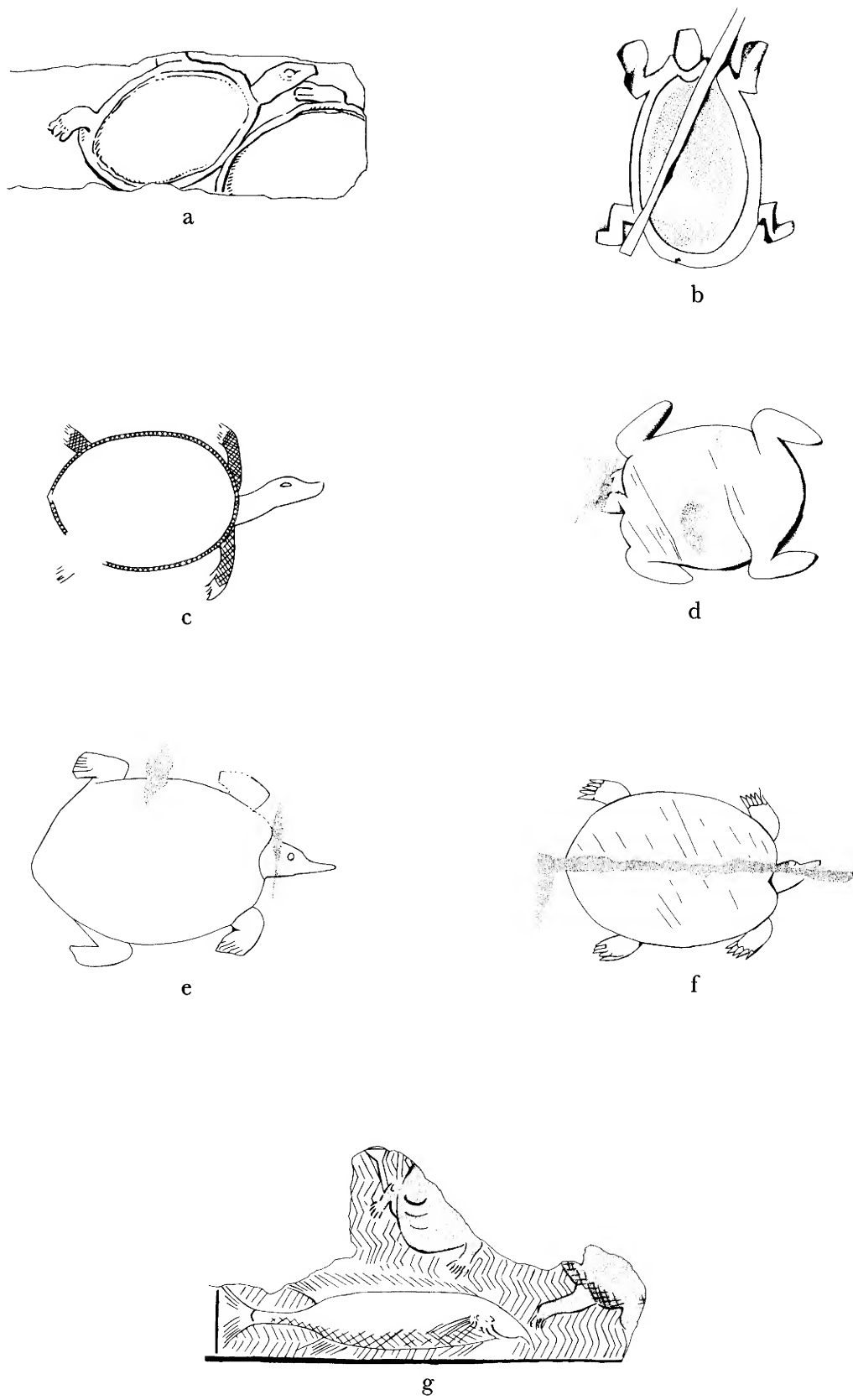


Figure 4

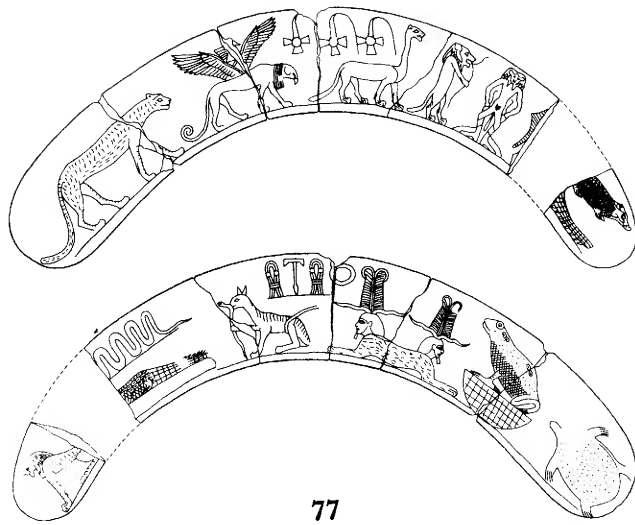


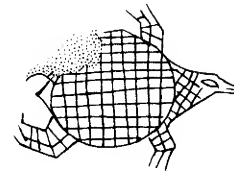
Figure 5

(Boldface numbers refer to the catalogue in Section 3)

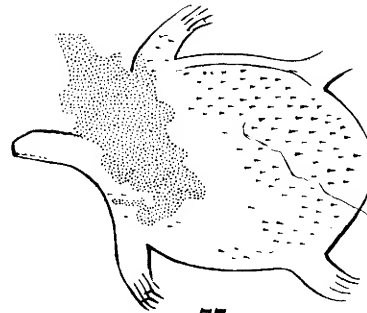
Kingdom, which are inscribed with texts invoking “protection,” and are carved from the very tooth of that ancient enemy, the hippopotamus.<sup>24</sup> On these blades the turtle introduces or terminates a cortege of creatures, some malignant, some beneficent, but all assembled for a common purpose, to ward off evil (Figure 5). The fact that these and kindred objects borrow certain motifs from protodynastic schist palettes and ivory carvings does not necessarily imply that the earlier pieces served the same function.<sup>25</sup> But such a possibility must be seriously considered, and it may be extended with greater confidence to another category of objects – the figurines of hippopotami that are so frequent both in the Pre- and Protodynastic Periods and in the Middle Kingdom.<sup>26</sup> For in this

<sup>24</sup> See in particular G. Steindorff, “The Magical Knives of Ancient Egypt” in *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 9 (1946), pp. 41–51, 106–107. The examples including turtles are listed below in Section 3 (77–91). Possibly the use of hippopotamus ivory is explained by the greater availability of that material in the Middle Kingdom; an example in the Metropolitan Museum (30.8.218) that has been plausibly attributed to the New Kingdom by Linda Robbins is made of elephant ivory, which had presumably become more common during that prosperous period.

<sup>25</sup> Notably the serpo-feline and the griffin; cf. G. Steindorff in *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 9 (1946), p. 49. The paucity of magical objects at Memphis during the aristocratic period of the Old Kingdom probably has some bearing on the rarity of such motifs at that time, although the griffin does occur in a landscape from the Neuserre sun temple (W. von Bissing in *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l’Égypte* 53 [1956], Pl. 9, following p. 338).



79



77

case there is further evidence to show that the animal in question was regarded as a typhonic antagonist of the king of Egypt as early as the First Dynasty.<sup>27</sup> It is equally probable that the relatively frequent representation of the turtle in the Protodynastic Period and in the Middle Kingdom was intended to be apotropaic. A similar idea was served by the later demon who wears a turtle in place of a human head; this frightening creation makes its first appearance in a pair of Eighteenth Dynasty wooden figurines (Plate 3), and it is included among the guardians who keep watch over the deceased on coffins of the Twenty-first Dynasty.<sup>28</sup> A hippopotamine equivalent is to be found in the redoubtable figure of the crocodile-backed, lion-clawed monster Toeris, who is known

<sup>26</sup> A particularly large number of Middle Kingdom examples are given by L. Keimer in *Revue de l’Égypte ancienne* 2 (1929), pp. 214–225, Pls. 11–15; 3 (1930), pp. 38–40 and Pl. 13. For predynastic examples see B. V. Bothmer, “A Predynastic Egyptian Hippopotamus” in *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 46 (1948), pp. 64–69.

<sup>27</sup> T. Säve-Söderbergh, *On Egyptian Representations of Hippopotamus Hunting as a Religious Motive* (*Horae Soederblomianae* 3), p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> B. van de Walle in *La Nouvelle Clé* 5 (1953), p. 178, n. 1. Plate 3 shows the two wooden representations of this demon, mistakenly described as turtles *ibid.*, p. 176, n. 4. The one on the right (BM 61416) is illustrated in F. Arundale, J. Bonomi, and S. Birch, *Gallery of Antiquities Selected from the British Museum*, Pl. 24, Fig. 88. I. E. S. Edwards informs me that the other (BM 50704) definitely comes from the tomb of Haremhab, and not that of Tuthmosis III as has previously been stated. The fact was established by Warren Dawson, who pointed out that another figure in the same group (BM 50702) is illustrated in situ by Theodore Davis in *The Tomb of Haremhabi*, Pl. 63.

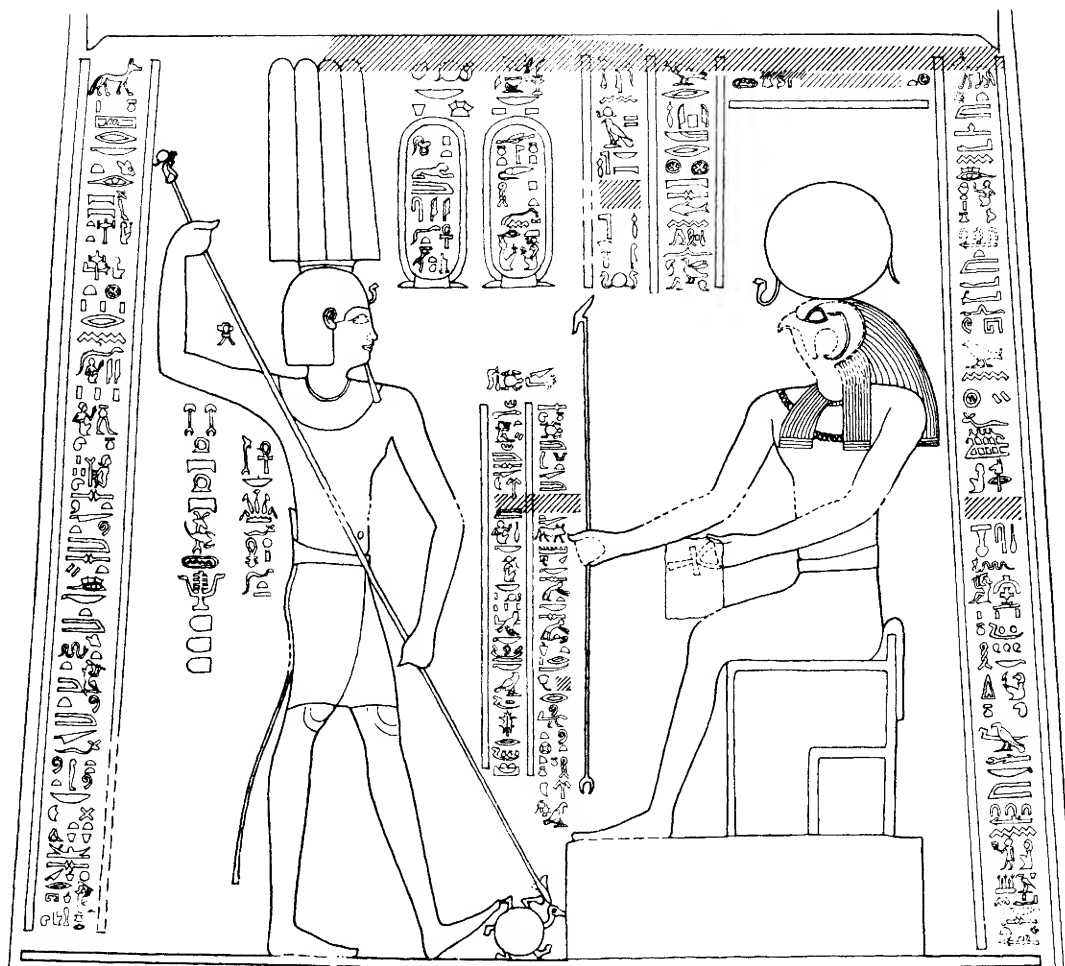


Figure 6

from the Protodynastic Period onward as a protector of the household. After the New Kingdom it would seem that the hippopotamus and turtle were seldom enlisted as allies save in these transmuted forms. By Greco-Roman times representations of animals themselves were chiefly created to deal with the sup-

posed enemies in a much less equivocal manner;<sup>29</sup> fashioned in wax or other perishable materials, they were no longer meant to be preserved as a means of warding off evil, but, on the contrary, were intended to localize the evil only long enough to annihilate it through their own destruction (Figure 6).<sup>30</sup>

29 In considering evidence from Egypt that may be as late as the Greek and Roman occupation, one must increasingly take into account the possibility of foreign importations, and I have tried to exclude material that does not seem to belong to Egyptian tradition: e.g. Brooklyn Mus. 37.853E, a gilded bronze figurine of a tortoise, C. R. Williams, *Gold and Silver Jewelry*, pp. 216–217 (no. 153) and Pl. 33 a–c; BM 36044, a leaden dish in the form of a tortoise; BM 57277, a large tortoise of imperial porphyry; BM 36044, a small bronze figurine of a tortoise or turtle, perhaps a weight; W. M. F. Petrie, *Ancient Weights and Measures*, p. 24 and Frontispiece (5154): nos. 5258 (definitely Trionyx) and 5186 are possibly earlier; W. M. F. Petrie, *Objects of Daily Use*, p. 14 and Pl. 11 (1). On the whole, Egypt's Mediterranean neighbors gave the turtle a respectable place in their mythology (G. Keller, *Antike Tierwelt* II, pp. 248–250), but the land tortoise came to be regarded as a noxious animal and took its place beside other creatures that were rightly or wrongly regarded as being poisonous – the toad, scorpion, snake, and salamander – as an apotropaic emblem on votive objects and amulets intended to avert the evil eye (*ibid.*, pp. 251–252). It is assumed that this idea was disseminated from the Near East by Roman soldiers of the Imperial Period. In Mesopotamia

the turtle or tortoise (usually of indeterminate species) lent its form to amulets from early times onward, and the tortoise appeared among various divine emblems on the Babylonian stela called *kudurru*; none of this evidence necessarily indicates that it was thought to be a malignant creature, but it may eventually have acquired that character by Assyrian times, for a pair of tortoises are associated with apotropaic figures on a bronze bell of that period (E. Van Buren, *Fauna of Ancient Mesopotamia*, pp. 103–104).

30 The illustration is taken from H. Junker, *Der grosse Pylon des Tempels der Isis in Philä*, Fig. 34, facing p. 66; cf. B. van de Walle in *La Nouvelle Cléo* 5 (1953), pp. 183–186. For images of wax, etc. see below, footnote 50. At least one relatively durable statuette of a hippopotamus is known from the Late Period (B. V. Bothmer in *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 46 [1948], p. 66), but, being made of limestone, this may well represent the beneficent white goddess (cf. T. Säve-Söderbergh, *On Egyptian Representations of Hippopotamus Hunting as a Religious Motive*, pp. 47 ff.) and in any case it has not been deliberately mutilated.

## 2 A Protodynastic Turtle: MMA 61.33

The unusual statuette of *Trionyx* that is the principal subject of these pages (Figure 7, Plates 4–5) illustrates both of the purposes that have just been described, and sums up the entire story of the turtle in ancient Egypt, for it was evidently manufactured at the very beginning of the First Dynasty and was deliberately mutilated some two or three millennia later, i.e. no earlier than the end of the New Kingdom and more probably toward the end of the Late Period.

This object was presented to the Metropolitan Museum in 1961 by Alice Hampshire Silver, who reports that it was purchased at Thebes. It measures 14.8 cm. in length, 11.8 cm. in width, and 5 cm. in thickness, and thus may be considered a life-sized representation of a fairly young specimen after about two or three years of optimum growth.<sup>31</sup> Its material, a black and olive-yellow stone that has been analyzed as a “serpentine pseudomorph of diorite,”<sup>32</sup> admirably suggests the spotted pattern of *Trionyx*, and the rounded outline of the carapace and the snouted head confirm the turtle’s identity beyond any doubt. In view of the material and the massive treatment of the subject, it is not surprising that the nose should be considerably curtailed, and this feature is seldom treated much more realistically in other examples. Evidently the pattern of fifteen concentric circles on the back, all of which were graven on the relatively soft surface by means of a primitive compass, consisting of two points at either end of a cord of adjustable length,<sup>33</sup> is intended to convey the effect of curved rows of tubercles, and the radiating lines seem

<sup>31</sup> According to Herndon G. Dowling; he adds that this size might not be attained before the fifth or sixth year if the supply of food were limited.

<sup>32</sup> The identification was made by Frederick Pough, who records the hardness as less than 4 and the specific gravity as 2.61. He describes the luster as dull, the fracture granular. The description of the color is my own.

<sup>33</sup> For the method, which seems quite obvious in the present case, cf. the opinion expressed by S. Clarke and R. Engelbach, *Ancient Egyptian Masonry*, p. 146, n. 2.

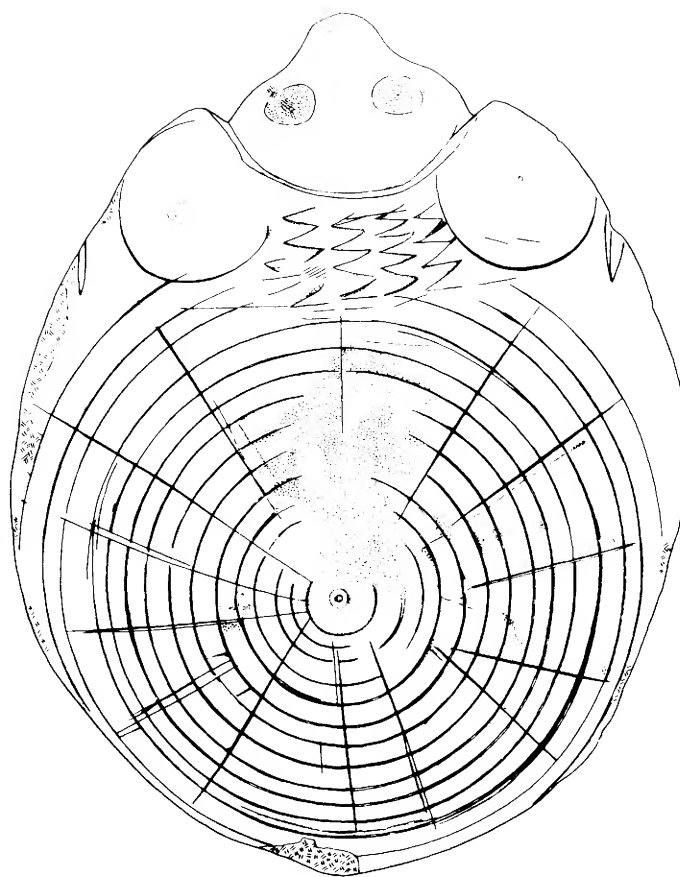


Figure 7

3/4 actual size

32



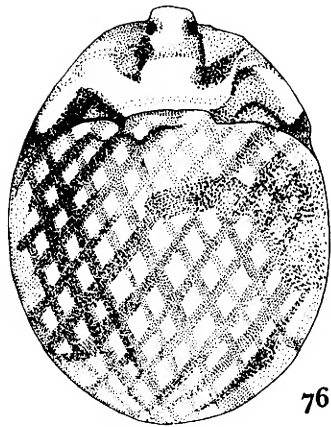


Figure 8

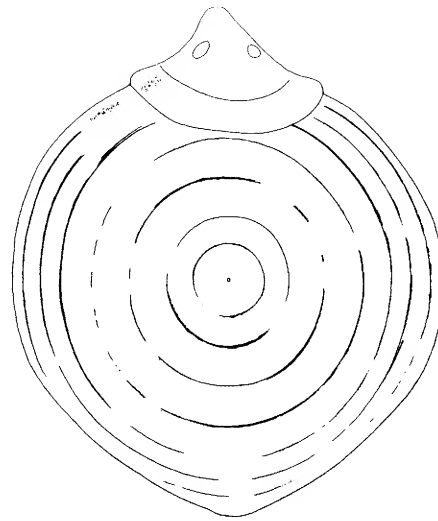
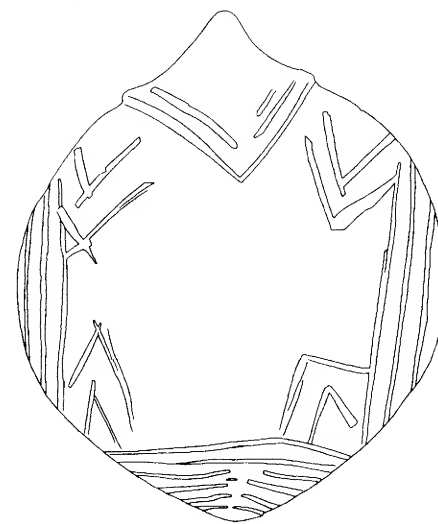


Figure 9

3/4 actual size



to have been added to break up the resultant pattern. A more puzzling detail is the pair of protuberances at the anterior end of the carapace, both of which are defined by a circle that has been mechanically executed, like the others. It seems unlikely that this feature is borrowed from some other species such as the land tortoise, for the protuberances seem to be isolated from the carapace by a small but distinct notch behind each of them. I therefore suggest that they are a stylized representation of the forelegs, as in a Middle Kingdom button seal in the British Museum (Figure 8), or a predynastic palette from Naqada (Figure 10 [17a]). This interpretation is not borne out by the position of the forelegs on the underside, but such discrepancies are by no means foreign to Egyptian art in later periods; one might compare representations of birds in flight that simultaneously show the wings extended and folded upon the side.<sup>34</sup> The vertical zigzags between the protuberances have nothing to do with the markings of the carapace and are almost certainly to be identified as water, the turtle's native element.<sup>35</sup> Although the eyes are very much pitted, it seems possible to conclude that their circular outline was again produced by mechanical means. The mouth is rendered by a horizontal slit beneath the snout, and an attempt has been made to bring out the contour of the jaw by means of a shallow transverse groove behind it.

On the whole, the treatment of the underside is even more stylized than that of the upper surface. The anterior end is as distorted as the carapace, and there is an inexplicable series of eight transverse

grooves across the plastron. Presumably the incised line around the margin is intended to suggest the juncture of the carapace and the skin of the underside, for the legs seem to emerge from it. The result by no means conforms to reality, however; the legs themselves are thin and unconvincing in form and they are arbitrarily located. No attempt has been made to imitate the characteristic shape of the turtle's claws, which instead resemble human hands.

Several of these features recur in a smaller statuette of a turtle that belonged to the Chauncey Murch Collection, presented to the Metropolitan Museum by Helen Miller Gould in 1910 (MMA 10. 130.2605; Figure 9, Plate 6). The length of this second turtle is 8.5 cm., width 7.6 cm., and thickness

34 E. g. D. Dunham and W. S. Smith, "A Middle Kingdom Painted Coffin from El Bersheh" in *Scritti in onore di Ippolito Rosellini* I, p. 267.

35 Faience hippopotami of the Middle Kingdom similarly bear emblems of their habitat, namely water plants, birds, and so on (references to Keimer in footnote 26 above). For the specific motif of water, cf. the ripples in the channeled spouts of later offering tables,

esp. Cairo Cat. 23082 (A. Karna, *Tables d'offrandes* [Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire], Pl. 18) or the ripples superimposed on a personification of the sea (L. Borchardt, *Grabdenkmal des Königs Sathu-re* II, Pl. 30). One might also compare the pattern on ivory fish from the First Dynasty royal mastaba at Naqada (Cairo Cat. 14031-9; J. de Morgan, *Recherches sur les origines de l'Égypte* II, p. 193, Figs. 701-713); here the zigzag lines are doubtless intended to represent scales, but also evoke the idea of water.

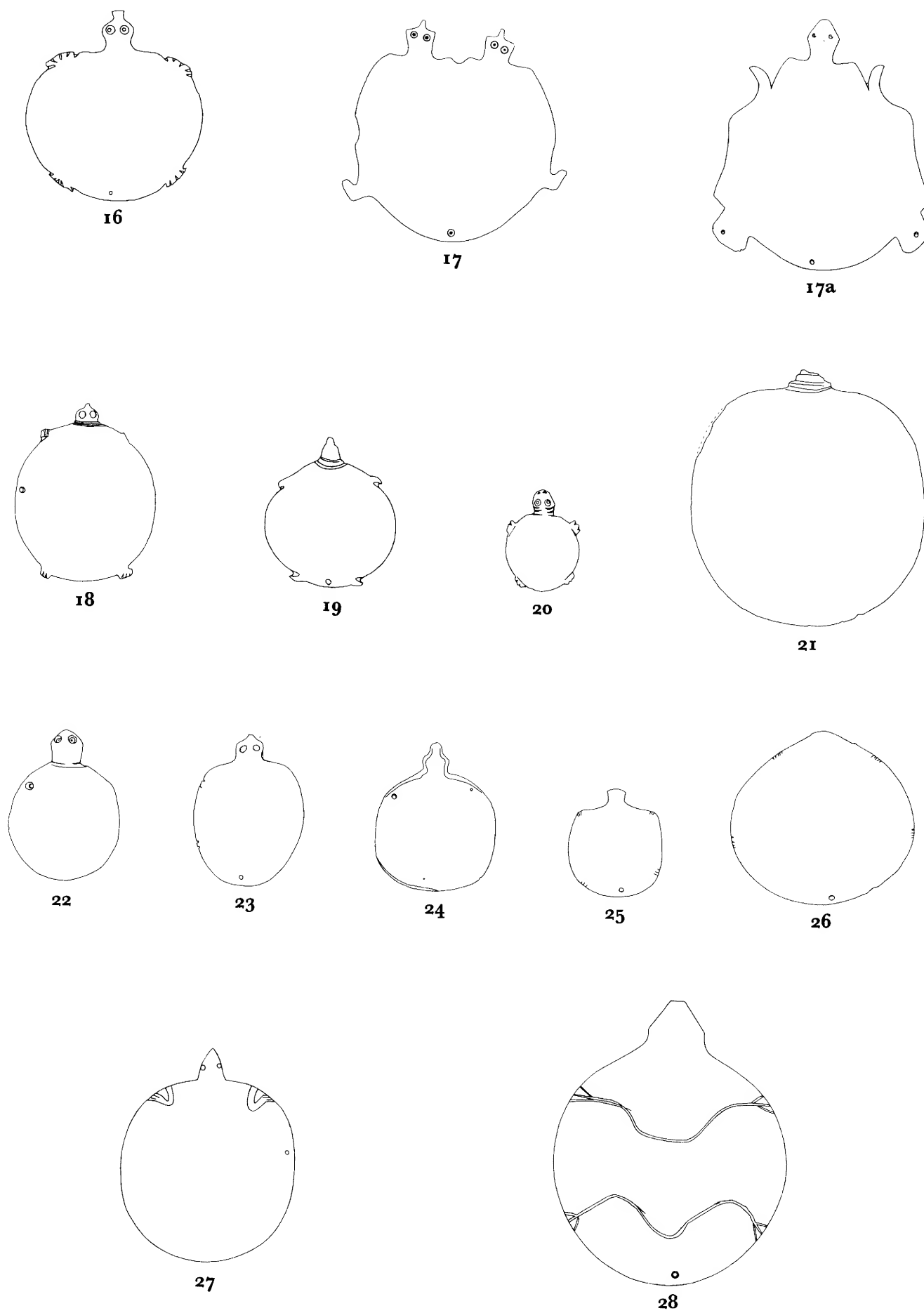


Figure 10



3.55 cm. The material has also proved to be serpentine but has a quite different character, owing to a green chrome mica infusion that provides a vitreous luster and an almost crystalline transparency.<sup>36</sup> The color varies from light to dark green, with opaque whitish streaks, and, although very attractive in itself, produces a less realistic impression than the other example. Concentric circles – in this case seven of them – have been scribed on the even softer surface of the carapace by the same primitive means as before, but without the addition of radiating lines. The anterior end of the carapace is again somewhat distorted, this time by a heavy collar, rounded on the upper surface and forming a V on the underside. The eyes are indicated by circles, but the left one is partially hollowed out by the depth of the outline. A further point of similarity is provided by the flat treatment of legs on the underside; these are sketched in a much more perfunctory manner, however (one cannot, in fact, be sure at which end the claws are located), and the rear legs are oriented differently. The parallel lines on either side of the plastron and below it may be a stylized attempt to define the latter.

Although a late predynastic or protodynastic date for the two turtles may seem self-evident, a certain amount of caution is advisable since no other solid and completely three-dimensional representations in stone are available for comparison.\* Furthermore, I know of no parallels for the use of widening concentric circles as a decorative pattern, or any contemporaneous examples of circles that were effected in the same manner, by means of two points and a string. The combination of subject, material, size, and style is not likely to have been produced at any later time, however. This may be seen from the comparative evidence that, for the sake of brevity, will be cited by reference to the list in Section 3. The subject is attested in all the major periods of pharaonic Egypt, but enjoyed its greatest popularity in pre- and protodynastic times, its later occurrence being limited to pendant amulets for the most part, and other small objects of more explicit magical significance. Even these become rare after the Middle Kingdom. Although a few pendants can be attributed to the Second Intermediate Period and Eighteenth Dynasty (66–68) and two may possibly belong to the Greco-Roman Period (70) or even later (71), the paucity of evidence is striking, for it decreases in inverse proportion to the abundance of other amulets recovered from the New Kingdom onward.

<sup>36</sup> The stone has been identified and described by Frederick Pough; he has recorded the hardness as less than 3, the specific gravity 2.84.

\* See, however, Addenda (pages 20, 34–35).

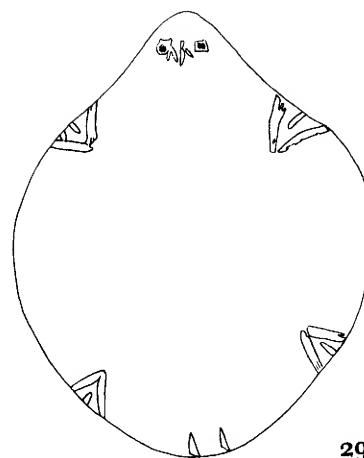


Figure 11

During the first of the two major predynastic periods (Naqada I), on the other hand, clay figurines of turtles (3, 30) were fashioned, as well as turtle-shaped cosmetic palettes of schist (16–28); the final predynastic period (Naqada II) produced, in addition to the schist palettes, a narrow-necked pottery bottle and several wide-mouthed theriomorphic vessels of stone, some of which represent turtles (5–9), and these vessels continued down to the beginning of the First Dynasty, as did the manufacture of various animal figurines in stone and faience. All of the vessels in the shape of turtles, as well as a turtle-shaped object that has been identified variously as a lid or macehead (31), are made of mottled or dark green stone such as the two types of serpentine that have been described earlier. The simplified form of the turtle, with the outline of the feet entirely omitted, is most frequently attested in schist palettes of Naqada II that consist of little more than a disk with a projecting head, the latter being characterized by a pair of inlaid eyes and a more or less salient proboscis (21–24, Figure 10). Further details are sometimes scratched on the surface (25–28): in two such cases (27–28) one pair of legs or both are schematically represented, as they are on the underside of the Metropolitan Museum statuettes, although the feet are directed outward rather than inward. In other cases (with or without projecting feet) a groove or double line at the neck corresponds to the “collar” of the smaller statuette (18–22), while the “shoulders” of the larger statuette recur not only in some of the palettes (e.g. 17, 17a), but also in at least one representation as late as the Middle Kingdom (95).

Among the stylistically comparable material, one object, described in previous publications as a protodynastic weight in the form of a turtle, should be given special consideration because it provides a striking link between the serpentine figurines and schist palettes (Figure 11, Plate 7). This is not much in-

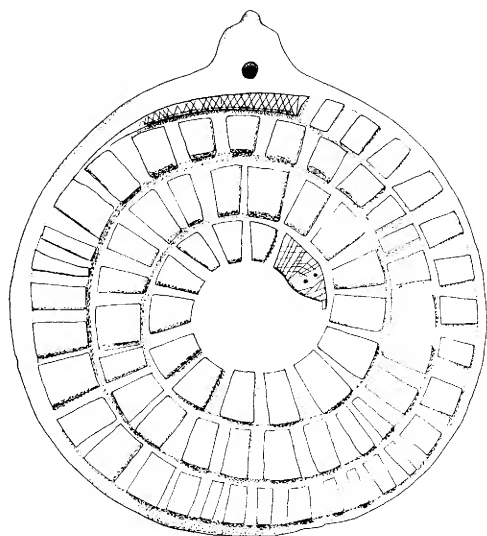


Figure 12

ferior in size to the smaller of the two statuettes, but it is so much flatter that it is evidently to be classified as a palette, despite the fact that it is not made of schist, as is usually the case, but of a black-and-white porphyritic stone with somewhat more contrast and definition than the serpentine pseudo-diorite mentioned earlier.<sup>37</sup> Its maximum length is 7.65 cm., width 6.1 cm., and thickness 1.1 cm. As in the case of the turtle figurines and palettes, the legs are schematically incised upon the flat surface, the closest parallel being the palette from Gerza (27) shown in Figure 10, which represents the legs crooked and the feet pointing outward. The flatness of the piece may explain the fact that the eyes appear on the same surface as the legs, since the Gerza palette, in fact, shows the same arrangement (although another, less similar palette [28] has eyes on the opposite side). The eyes are indicated in rounded relief and are therefore more protuberant than seems appropriate for a turtle, but even more prominent eyes occur on one of a series of turtle-shaped dishes to be mentioned presently (11). While it is difficult to explain the the presence of two or three longitudinal scratches

between the eyes, two deeper grooves at the posterior end are evidently meant to represent the tail, even though they seem too widely spaced for this purpose.

Despite the lack of any parallel for the use of concentric circles and radiating lines to suggest the pattern of the carapace, this feature of the Museum's two figurines is strongly reminiscent of the spiral pattern in the form of a coiled snake that appears on early gameboards, and there is reason to think that the resemblance may have been recognized by the Egyptians themselves. These dishlike gameboards normally have a rectangular projection at the edge, but in at least two archaic examples, both made of limestone, the projection has a rounded form that is strongly suggestive of a turtle's head (Figure 12, Plate 7).<sup>38</sup>

The same simplification of form that is evidenced by the turtle palettes also appears in a series of turtle-shaped dishes originally composed of two halves that could be slid apart by rotating them upon the pivot that united them (10-15). A single excavated example from Qatta (15) was actually found in a protodynastic context, and other parallels (one in the form of a fish) are equally well dated to the Archaic Period (Figure 13).<sup>39</sup>

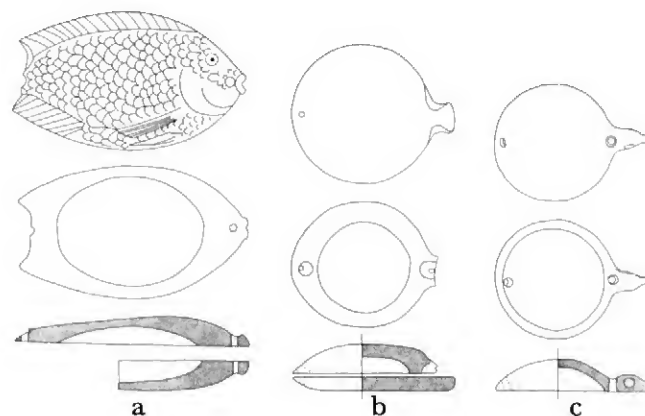


Figure 13

37 University College, London, cat. no. 19602. Mentioned by W. M. F. Petrie, *Prehistoric Egypt*, p. 28; *Ancient Weights and Measures*, p. 18. I am very much obliged to H. S. Smith for providing information and a photograph, and for allowing me to use the latter. For the interpretation of this object as a palette, one might compare the fish palette described and illustrated by W. M. F. Petrie, *Labyrinth, Gerzeh and Mazghuneh*, p. 22 and Pls. 6(8), 12(5), which is only slightly smaller (about 6.5 cm. long) and is made of a very similar porphyritic stone.

38 Figure 12 is taken from W. M. F. Petrie, *Amulets*, Pl. 47 (96f). The other example is published by A. Scharff, *Die Altertümer der Vor- und Frühzeit Ägyptens II*, p. 145 (no. 274) and Pl. 33. Scharff remarks on the resemblance to an animal head, but suggests that it may be canine. A third limestone example, from Qift, Cairo J. d'E. 27354, has a small rounded projection that may be similar to these. A fourth

example (MMA 58.125.1, schist, length 32 cm.) has the more usual rectangular projection, which bears the name of the Horus Aha, but the reverse displays three groups of parallel grooves along the edges (one group restored) as shown in the adjacent drawing. In this respect it resembles the underside of MMA 10.130.2605; cf. Figure 9.




39 Figure 13c is 13 in Section 3. Figure 13b is taken from *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 41 (1960), p. 93, Fig. 22 (1); cf. p. 94 and Pl. 40 (4). Figure 13a is *ibid.*, 42 (1961), p. 127, Fig. 13 (2); cf. p. 128 and Pl. 27 (2). These two examples come from Adolf Klasens's excavations at Abu Roash. Possibly the first of Klasens's examples, a schist dish with limestone lid, is to be compared with the schist dish in W. M. F. Petrie, *Abydos I*, Pl. 44 (26), which is much the same in size and form; but Petrie's drawing does not indicate the existence of any hole for a pivot or fastening.

A more specific indication that the Museum's turtle figurines may be as late as the First Dynasty is probably to be recognized in the absence of any provision for inlay within the eyes,<sup>40</sup> and it is fortunate that they have not been hollowed out for this purpose, since the damage sustained by the larger turtle would otherwise have been less easy to interpret.

As it is, there can be no doubt that the damaged eyes have been deliberately blinded to render the animal helpless, and that other parts of the surface have been similarly pecked away for the same reason. The extent of these injuries is indicated in Figure 7, which shows that all four paws have been maimed, parts of the nose battered, and that further attacks have been concentrated on the central anterior portion of the carapace and on the belly. Due allowance must be made for a certain amount of accidental damage, but this is almost entirely confined to the right edge of the underside. It is difficult to say precisely when the intentional injuries were inflicted, for the mutilation of images for magical purposes is attested in virtually every period of Egyptian history. There is, for example, the group of three scarabs, two of silver and one of lapis lazuli, which were worn by an Eleventh Dynasty official named Wah in his capacity of estate manager of Meket-re; all three scarabs were placed in the wrappings of Wah's mummy after his death – but not until the surface of the head and clypeus had been carefully hammered and pecked away (Plate 8).<sup>41</sup> This precaution is evidently related to a curtailment or mutilation of hieroglyphs that has frequently been noted in the funerary texts placed in Old Kingdom burial chambers and Middle Kingdom coffins,<sup>42</sup> although the heads of insects were normally exempted from such treatment until the Thirteenth Dynasty, when parts of nearly all animal hieroglyphs

were indiscriminately amputated.<sup>43</sup> For the New Kingdom a particularly striking parallel for the mutilated turtle is provided by the vengeful destruction of Queen Hatshepsut's statues, which took place soon after Tuthmosis III claimed the throne; in every case the royal cobra was battered away and sometimes – as shown by the face illustrated in Plate 8 – the nose was knocked off and the eyes were pecked out, the latter presenting much the same aspect as those of the blinded turtle. Other statues of the queen were simply decapitated with a single blow once the uraeus had been removed. After these preliminaries, the whole of the body was then more haphazardly reduced to fragments, and the debris consigned to oblivion.<sup>44</sup> Greater consistency is shown in the annihilation of limestone statues of prisoners dating to the second half of the Old Kingdom, all of which were broken at the neck and at the waist.<sup>45</sup> In this case, however, the fragments were left scattered about in various parts of the Memphite pyramid temples to which the statues evidently belonged; it therefore seems likely that their destruction was not foreseen or intended when they were initially made, but was prompted by the fear-ridden reactions of a later period. Such a conclusion would agree with the fact that the smaller inscribed figurines of prisoners that also began to be produced in the last part of the Old Kingdom were not broken, even though they were more fragile and might more easily have been destroyed.<sup>46</sup>

In the case of the turtle statuette it is equally probable that the mutilation is the work of a far later period than that which produced the sculpture, for there is little indication that its smaller counterpart was exposed to similar treatment, nor is such evidence to be found in any other representations of

however, that while the hieroglyph  is sometimes avoided, he does not know of a case where it is mutilated (p. 60).

44 H. E. Winlock, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri*, pp. 77, 141–142; *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 23 (1928), Sect. II, p. 15.


45 G. Jéquier, *Monument funéraire de Pépi II, III*, pp. 25–29, Pls. 47–48; also L. Borchardt, *Grabdenkmal des Königs Ne-user-re*, p. 42, and W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt* I, p. 114, Fig. 67. According to Ahmed Fakhry, the last example (MMA 47.2) derives from the pyramid temple of Isesy; if so, the same provenance may be applied to MMA 64.260, which is said to belong to the same group (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* n.s. 24 [1965/66], p. 53).

46 For these figurines see G. Posener, *Princes et Pays d'Asie et de Nubie*, and H. Junker, *Giza VIII*, pp. 32–38. The comparison of the mutilated captives is more pertinent than it might seem, for three bound captives, Syrian, Libyan, and Nubian, are associated with a turtle on a small apotropaic plaque of limestone: W. M. F. Petrie, *Meydum and Memphis III*, p. 43 and Pl. 37 (45). The date of the plaque is uncertain, but it can hardly be earlier than the end of the New Kingdom.

40 The hollows for inlaid eyes are lacking on two wide-necked turtle vessels that are relatively late specimens of their type (8–9), as well as the University College turtle palette and the archaic dish, both of which have the protuberant eyes that have just been described.

41 MMA 40.3.12–14, Rogers Fund; H. E. Winlock, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri*, p. 225. A microscopic examination of the two silver scarabs has confirmed Winlock's observations beyond question. It is less certain, however, that the lapis lazuli scarab (40.3.14) was similarly mutilated; cf. W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt* I, p. 231.


42 In such cases the mutilations were effected by omitting various parts of the hieroglyphs so as to render them harmless from the moment they were inscribed; see P. Lacau in *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache* 51 (1914), pp. 1–64; B. Gunn, *Teti Pyramid Cemeteries*, pp. 171–177; also the examples of the horned viper with severed head cited in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 76 (1956), p. 102.

43 E. g. W. M. F. Petrie, *Kahun, Gurob, Hawara*, Pl. 5 (end of Dyn. XII: offering table of the daughter of Amenemhet III); J. de Morgan, *Fouilles à Dahchour* (1894), pp. 101–106 (early Dyn. XIII: inscriptions of Awibre Hor), where the head of  is consistently omitted. Cf. P. Lacau in *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache* 51 (1914), p. 57, who notes,

turtles prior to the Nineteenth Dynasty, when the immolation of Trionyx is first depicted. It therefore seems justifiable to conclude that the protodynastic sculpture was reused at a date that can hardly have been much earlier than the second half of the New Kingdom, with the probability of the date increasing as it is advanced toward the end of the Dynastic Period. This conclusion is reinforced by textual evidence in the form of magical spells directed against malignant animals or spirits. Although a great deal of repetition and systematic detail is always characteristic of such texts, I know of no text prior to the Nineteenth Dynasty that lists mutilations, including blinding, as methodically as is illustrated by the much-abused turtle statuette. A papyrus dating to the reign of Ramesses II contains an incantation to render the scorpion harmless by blinding this other “enemy of Re” by putting out his eyes, and by laming his fingers.<sup>47</sup> The gruesome details are multiplied in the “Book of Overthrowing Apophis,” a compendium of magical rituals that is preserved in a papyrus of the fourth century B.C.<sup>48</sup> This work doubtless had earlier antecedents, but R. O. Faulkner has suggested that it was originally composed in Late Egyptian – so that in any case it originated no earlier than the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty – and was recast in artificial Middle Egyptian at a later date.<sup>49</sup> The rituals in question are mainly directed against the malignant serpent Apophis himself, but also against other animals, including the turtle; they prescribe the fashioning and destruction of perishable images representing these creatures,<sup>50</sup> and they call for the destruction of the creatures in terms that are as specific and detailed as the injuries inflicted on the protodynastic turtle. The earth god Aker, for example, is invoked against Apophis as follows:

Aker seizes his strength to separate the flesh from his bones, to break his legs, to cut off his arms for me, to seal

47 A. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, Third Series*, p. 61 and Pl. 35.

48 R. O. Faulkner, *Papyrus Bremner-Rhind* (*Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca* 3); cf. B. van de Walle’s remarks in *La Nouvelle Clé* 5 (1953), pp. 180–181, and F. Lexa’s translations in *La Magie dans l’Égypte antique* II, pp. 83–98. The papyrus specifically associates the turtle with Apophis in 25, 19 and 32, 26. In the latter case the association appears in a list of “names of Apophis that shall not be,” one of which is  “Apophis-enemy-turtle.”

49 R. O. Faulkner, *Papyrus Bremner-Rhind* (*Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca* 3), pp. ix–x.

50 E. g. R. O. Faulkner, *Papyrus Bremner-Rhind* (*Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca* 3), 23, 6–12; 28, 16–17; 29, 13–15. These instructions specify that the figure is to be drawn on papyrus or modeled in wax, then tied up, spat upon, trampled, pierced with a knife, and burned.

51 MMA 50.85, Fletcher Fund; N. E. Scott, “The Metternich Stela” in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* n.s. 9 (1950/51), pp. 201–217; C. E. Sander-Hansen, *Die Texte der Metternichstela*.




Figure 14

the lips of his mouth for me, to hack out his teeth for me, to seize his speech for me, to blind his eyes for me, to seize his hearing for me, to take out his heart for me. (Recto 27, 10–12)

The same literal-minded detail is typical of many other texts of the same period, such as the inscriptions on the Metternich stela, well dated to the end of the Thirtieth Dynasty.<sup>51</sup> The reverse of this magical monument shows the turtle among various animals who are trampled by the monstrous but protective solar demon Harmerti (Plate 9), and the texts beneath contain a curse against “those who are in the water” – again doubtless including the turtle: Your mouths shall be sealed by Re; your wrath shall be blocked by Sakhmet; your tongue shall be cut off by Thoth; and your eyes shall be blinded by Hike. (Verso 43)

Another magical stela that is at least as late as the preceding represents the turtle much more prominently, below a donkey-headed representation of Apophis tied to a chopping block (Figure 14).<sup>52</sup> Here Sakhmet is invoked against the turtle’s evil associate,

52 Kestner-Museum, Hanover, no. 1935.200.445. Published by H. P. Blok in *Bulletin van de Vereeniging tot Bevordering der Kennis van de Antieke Beschaving* 3, Pt. 1 (June 1928), pp. 15 ff., and *Acta Orientalia* 7 (1929), pp. 97–113; more recently discussed by M. Guentsch-Ogloueff in *Bulletin de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale* 40 (1941), pp. 129 ff., and P. Derchain in *Revue d’Égyptologie* 16 (1964), pp. 19–23. The facsimile in Figure 14, made from the original, is reproduced with the kind permission of Irme Woldering. For the association of the turtle and the donkey-headed Apophis see also G. Daressy in *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l’Égypte* 12 (1912), pp. 143–144. Also A. Klasens, *A Magical Statue Base (Socle Behague)*, pp. 4, 51 (K), and Pl. 5: here Harmerti spears a snake labeled “Apophis” and a turtle labeled , which perhaps means “Exudation of Apophis” (cf. *ry.t* in A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache* II, p. 399 [13–15]). If so, this appellation would be a pejorative term like “scum of Satan.” It is also possible that the two elements of the label are in apposition, like the name “Apophis-enemy-turtle” cited in footnote 48 above, but this alternative would not affect the meaning of *ryt*.

“that she may burn thy limbs, that she may amputate thy fingers and cut off thy feet,” and the same fate is doubtless intended for the turtle itself, as well as the lizard that appears behind him. Similar texts accompany the numerous ritual scenes in Greco-Roman temples that show maleficent creatures, again including the turtle, being speared by the king.<sup>53</sup> If the narrowly superstitious spirit of these texts suggests that the ignominious reuse of the protodynastic turtle may have occurred at the end of the Dynastic Period, it is equally possible that its mutilation was accomplished during a priestly ceremony, which may have been repeated on more than one occasion.

The circumstances that brought the statuette into the hands of its superstitious assailants cannot, of course, be deduced by any means but speculation. One may, however, compare the quite different fortunes of another protodynastic object that was in

circulation as late as the Eighteenth Dynasty, when it was apparently valued for its antiquity or talismanic virtue: this is a fragment of a decorated palette, one side of which was inscribed with the name of Queen Tiy, the consort of Amenophis III, the other side bearing the remnants of three rows of warriors that formed part of the original design (Plate 9).<sup>54</sup> There is far less likelihood that the antiquity of the turtle statuette would have been appreciated in the New Kingdom or later, in view of the bad reputation turtles had acquired by then, although it might have been reused as a protective talisman before it was attacked as an embodiment of evil. More probably, it was simply uncovered by accident after two or three thousand years, perhaps during excavations for a tomb or temple, and then, after being rendered harmless, was reburied for an almost equal length of time to await the more tolerant and scientific interest of the present day.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Figure 6 above, and footnote 30.

<sup>54</sup> Cairo J. d'E. 46148. Published by W. von Bissing in *Archiv für Orientforschung* 6 (1931), pp. 1–2. The material is dark green schist; the maximum dimensions are: height 14.5 cm., width 11.5 cm. A more doubtful case of the same kind is Leiden F 1938/10.23, a predynastic palette bearing the cartouche of *Mn-hpr-Rʿ*. The material is schist; the dimensions are: length 23.8 cm., height 9 cm. For the type

cf. W. M. F. Petrie and J. E. Quibell, *Naqada and Ballas*, Pl. 47 (28, 29, 31–33). Although this piece deserves to be made known, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that the added inscription is more likely the work of a modern forger than an artisan of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The style of the two uraei, each of which wears a Lower Egyptian crown, is particularly suspicious, as is the ambiguous form of the animals behind them; it is not clear whether the latter are intended to be lions or calves.

## Addendum

A stone figurine of a turtle (99, Plate 7), recently purchased at Samsun, on the Black Sea, has just been brought to my attention by its owner, Richard Falkiner of London. Like the turtle recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum (32), this specimen shows a series of concentric circles with straight lines radiating from the center, but the circles have not been made by means of a compass, since they conform to the unusually elongated shape of the carapace. Furthermore, the radiating lines do not seem to be scratched at random, as in the other case, but form a pattern resembling the hieroglyph for “star,” ★. If the resemblance is not purely fortuitous, this may allude to the astronomical aspect of the turtle that is attested in later times by a constellation identified as twin turtles.<sup>55</sup> In any case it seems likely that the figurine originally came from Egypt, but this question cannot profitably be discussed until the stone has been identified. Mr. Falkiner believes that his specimen also resembles our 32 in that the surface

seems to show signs of deliberate damage, particularly around the head.

I had not mentioned the twin-turtle constellation in my original discussion because of its seeming lack of relevance to the material under consideration,<sup>56</sup> but the starlike pattern on Mr. Falkiner’s figurine warrants the inclusion of the following comments, based on Richard Parker’s notes on Egyptian astronomical charts. He observes that, beginning with the Middle Kingdom coffins, the twin turtles are found right down to the Ptolemaic Period, in most cases written as though they were a pair but sometimes as a plural; some depictions have their backs embellished with stars, twelve on each. In addition, Professor Parker has assured me that there is no evidence that representations of the turtle constellation were ever mutilated in any way. He notes that the typhonic god Seth is never associated with these turtles, as Hapy and Duamutef, two of the benevolent sons of Horus, sometimes are.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. the group of five stars in two protodynastic representations of the cow fetish called Bat, which may also refer to a constellation, although it is not otherwise known as such: see *Journal of the American*

*Research Center in Egypt* 1 (1962), pp. 11–12.

<sup>56</sup> The topic is dealt with by B. van de Walle in *La Nouvelle Cléo* 5 (1953), pp. 175–176.

# 3. Representations of Turtles in Ancient Egypt

## I Predynastic and protodynastic vessels

All of the published examples occur on the dark red ware with white painted decoration that is characteristic of Naqada I.

(1) **Bowl:** Cairo Cat. 2076. See Figure 15a.

DIMENSIONS: Diameter 24 cm.

PROVENANCE: Abydos.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: W. von Bissing in *L'Anthropologie* 9 (1898), Pl. 3, Fig. 2 and pp. 246–247; *Ägyptische Kunstgeschichte* III, Pl. 2 (11). J. de Morgan, *Recherches sur les origines de l'Égypte* I, Pl. 2 (5). E. A. W. Budge, *Egypt in the Neolithic and Archaic Periods (A History of Egypt I)*, p. 99. W. von Bissing, *Tongefässe I (Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire)*, pp. 22–23 and Pl. 7 (2076). W. F. Edgerton in *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 39 (1923), p. 113, Fig. 3. J. Capart, *Les Débuts de l'art égyptien*, p. 109, Fig. 76; *Primitive Art in Egypt*, p. 112, Fig. 84. W. M. F. Petrie, *Prehistoric Egypt*, Pl. 23 (2). J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne* I, p. 279, Fig. 184. H. Asselberghs, *Chaos en Behersing*, Pl. 7, Fig. 11.

DESCRIPTION: The principal elements of the decoration are a boat, a dog attacking a large mammal, a harpooned hippopotamus, and a crocodile; the smaller details include birds, fish, a scorpion, a pair of animals resembling lizards (cf. 3), and a turtle. The markings on the turtle's carapace are represented by means of an irregular crisscrossed pattern. Petrie's drawing is more accurate than that of de Morgan (the latter followed by Budge); the other illustrations are reproduced from the original publication by Bissing.

(2) **Bowl with four tubular legs.** See Figure 15b.

DIMENSIONS: Diameter about 17.5 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: J. Garstang, *Mahâsna and Bêt Khallâf*, Pl. 3 (top) and p. 5. W. M. F. Petrie, *Prehistoric Egypt*, Pl. 23 (1).

DESCRIPTION: The decoration includes the following elements: three human figures, one of which is harpooning a hippopotamus, a second hippopotamus, plants, a doglike animal, and a turtle. The markings on the turtle's carapace resemble a series of chevrons.



Figure 15a

Figure 15b



- (3) **Bowl with separately-modeled figures applied to rim and interior surface:** Leiden F 1930/4.2. See Plate 10.

DIMENSIONS: Height 8.5 cm., diameter 15.5 cm.

PROVENANCE: Bought in Luxor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: W. van Wijngaarden in *Oudheidkundige Mededeelingen uit 's Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 13 (1932), pp. 73–76 and Fig. 29.

DESCRIPTION: The painted decoration consists of white cross-hatched triangles pointed inward. The separately-modeled figures on the rim are a pair of lizards; a pair of turtles, one of which is now missing, were similarly applied to the interior of the bowl. A chevron pattern is painted on the backs of the lizards, while the carapace of the surviving turtle is spotted. The turtle's legs have broken away, leaving traces where unpainted fragments of clay are exposed. According to Dr. Klasens, to whom I am also indebted for confirming the remains of paint, it would seem that the entire turtle was broken off and subsequently replaced, but that the legs were lost in the process.

- (4) **Alabaster jar with sides decorated in relief:** in private possession.

DIMENSIONS: Height 10.7 cm., width 9.6 cm.

DESCRIPTION: The jar is pear-shaped, with a plain neckless mouth. The following figures are evenly distributed around the circumference: two lizards, two scorpions (feet displayed on either side of the body as in J. E. Quibell, *Hierakonpolis* I, Pl. 12[2]), and a turtle, viewed from above as usual. The shape and material of the vessel, and the presence and character of the reliefs suggest that the date is First Dynasty. The combination of lizards and turtle has been remarked in the preceding example, of considerably earlier date.

## II Theriomorphic vessels

A pottery example (best illustrated by J. Capart in *Les Debuts de l'art égyptien*, p. 126, Fig. 93, and *Primitive Art in Egypt*, p. 130, Fig. 103) has sometimes been identified as a tortoise (M. Murray in *British School of Archaeology in Egypt, Studies* II, p. 41; J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne* I, p. 309); but, despite the presence of four legs, the form is apparently suggested by similar objects that are clearly birds. An indisputable turtle jar of red polished ware, dating to the end of the Predynastic Period, is known from Abusir el Meleq (5), but most of the surviving examples belong to one or the other of two types of stone vessels. Those belonging to the first type represent an earlier tradition, some of them being late predynastic (6–7), while others, of more stylized form, are probably as late as the First Dynasty (8–9). (An even more common subject is the frog or toad, discussed by H. Kantor in

*Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 11 [1952], pp. 242–245 and Pls. 23–24.) The second type (10–15) is a dish with a lid that slides open by means of a pivot; as indicated by the provenance of 15 and the parallels cited in footnote 39 above, the date probably lies within the Archaic Period.

- (5) **Small-necked jar:** Cairo J. d'E. 38173. See Figure 16 and Plate 10.

MATERIAL: Dark red polished pottery.

DIMENSIONS: Length 9.5 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: A. Scharff, *Abusir el Meleq* I, pp. 26, 148 (B) and Pl. 15 (73). J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne* I, p. 452, Fig. 301.

DESCRIPTION: All four feet are indicated on the underside; the body is hollow, and the long nose of the turtle (now broken off) forms the spout.



- (6) **Wide-mouthed, ring-necked vessel:** Brussels E 3009. See Plate 11.

MATERIAL: Described by Constant de Wit as a black “calcaire coquillé,” that is to say limestone with a ribbon-like mottling produced by the remains of shells. The stone is not hard and is rather light in weight; the luster is dull, the fracture granular.

DIMENSIONS: Length 13 cm., width 10 cm., height 4 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: G. Steindorff, *Die Kunst der Ägypter*, pp. 268 (d), 324.

DESCRIPTION: The snouted head, wide shallow carapace, and three-clawed feet characterize Trionyx very successfully, despite a certain degree of stylization. The eyes are indicated by a pair of cuplike holes, presumably intended to hold inlay; a shallow groove across the back of the neck might be intended as a fold in the skin. Toward the rear of the carapace there is a loop for suspension that recurs in some other theriomorphic vessels; see the reference to H. Kantor mentioned above.

- (7) **Wide-mouthed, ring-necked vessel:** Louvre E 11175. See Plate 12.

MATERIAL: As described by Mme Desroches-Noblecourt, who kindly brought this piece to my attention and provided the photographs shown here, the stone is a greenish serpentine mottled with black.

DIMENSIONS: Length 7 cm., width 6.5 cm., height 2.5 cm.

DESCRIPTION: This example is much more stylized than example 6. The carapace is round and more steeply domed; the feet are reduced to flat tabs, and the head is an equally flat blunt projection, with the mouth indicated by a narrow groove. A pair of round hollows form



the eyes. A particularly broad and well-defined lip surrounds the central cavity. On the bottom is a small circular hole 2 cm. deep that may have enabled the vessel to be secured upon a flat dish or base by means of a projecting tenon in the latter.

- (8) **Wide-mouthed, ring-necked vessel:** Berlin 19738. See Plate 14.

MATERIAL: Described by A. Scharff as dark green stone.

DIMENSIONS: Length 9.2 cm., height 2 cm.; the opening is 2 cm. wide at mouth and does not widen appreciably.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: A. Scharff, *Die Altertümer der Vor- und Frühzeit Ägyptens* I, p. 220 (no. 634) and Pl. 21.

DESCRIPTION: The body is flatter but the feet are again reduced to projecting tabs, and the head is blunt, although less flat. No eyes are indicated, but the mouth is represented by a narrow groove. In this and the following example the rims show no undercutting.

- (9) **Wide-mouthed, ring-necked vessel:** Munich, Ägyptische Staatssammlung 1587. See Plate 13.

MATERIAL: Described by H. W. Müller as green feldspar.

DIMENSIONS: Length 10.3 cm., height 4 cm.

DESCRIPTION: This specimen resembles the preceding, but the carapace is higher and the head and limbs are yet more stylized.

- (10) **Lid or shallow dish:** in private possession, location unknown. See Plate 14.

MATERIAL: Described by L. Keimer as schist.

DIMENSIONS: Unknown; described as "petit."

BIBLIOGRAPHY: L. Keimer in *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 32 (1949/50), p. 76, n. 1 and p. 77, Fig. 13b.

DESCRIPTION: The shape of the head and carapace are well characterized, though undetailed. The eyes do not seem to be indicated. As in the succeeding examples, the neck is drilled through with a large hole that provided a means of fastening the missing half; it is not clear whether or not there is a second hole at the opposite edge.

- (11) **Shallow dish and lid:** Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, E.G.A. 3201.1943. See Plate 15.

MATERIAL: Described by Richard Nicholls as hard white limestone.

DIMENSIONS: Length 7 cm.

DESCRIPTION: Both halves of the dish probably had nearly the same form originally, but in one case the head (or other projection) has been broken off. The head of the intact half is almost triangular and is demarcated from the carapace by an irregular groove. Three more transverse grooves appear on the head itself, one of which could be explained as a fold in the neck, although the other two – situated between the eyes and the tip of the nose – are less easily explained. The eyes are indicated in relief, as a pair of very distinct moundlike protuberances.

There are holes through the neck and rear edge for a pivot and fastening, which no longer exist.

- (12) **Lid or shallow dish:** Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, E.G.A. 3200.1943. See Plate 14.

MATERIAL: Schist.

DIMENSIONS: Length 5.6 cm.

DESCRIPTION: The head is more realistic than that of the preceding example, although not quite so realistic as 10, and it is also distinguished from the latter by the presence of a large drilled eye on either side. Holes are again provided at the front and rear.

- (13) **Lid or shallow dish:** Louvre I 1202. See Plate 15.

MATERIAL: Alabaster.

DIMENSIONS: Length 5.3 cm., width 4.1 cm., height 1 cm.

DESCRIPTION: This example closely resembles the one preceding in every respect save material; it will be noted that there is only 3 mm. difference in length.

- (14) **Lid or shallow dish:** Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, 1955.86. See Plate 15.

MATERIAL: Schist (described as "indurated mudstone").

DIMENSIONS: Length 6.8 cm., width 4.4 cm., height 1 cm.

DESCRIPTION: Similar to preceding, including the holes fore and aft, but lacks any indication of the eyes.

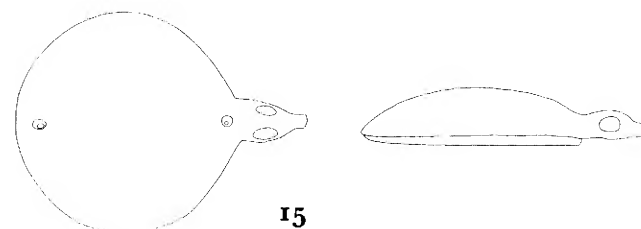
- (15) **Receptacle with lid:** Cairo Museum. See drawings below.

MATERIAL: Schist.

DIMENSIONS: Length 6 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: J. Leclant, "Fouilles et Travaux en Égypte, 1951–1952" in *Orientalia* 22 (1953), pp. 98–99 and Pl. 23, Fig. 41 (showing the dish in situ).

DESCRIPTION: Both the dish and lid are preserved, as in the case of 11, but unlike 11 only one of the two parts is in the shape of a turtle, the other being a flat disk (cf. Fig. 13b as compared with Fig. 13a). This specimen was brought to my attention by Professor van de Walle, who observed a reference to it in *Chronique d'Égypte* 27 (1952), p. 350. Further inquiries were made through Mme Attiya Habachi in Cairo, and the excavator, Shafik Farid, kindly provided the accompanying drawings and other data. The provenance is Qatta, about 35 kilometers northwest of Cairo on the edge of the desert; the tomb (no. 33) is conspicuously protodynastic.





### III *Theriomorphic palettes*

Only a few examples of this well-known and numerous group are included in the following compilation.

- (16) **Schist palette:** Manchester Museum 2377. See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length about 13.3 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: W. M. F. Petrie and J. E. Quibell, *Naqada and Ballas*, Pl. 47 (9).

DESCRIPTION: This is one of several examples that emphasize the proboscis of Trionyx. Projecting toes (apparently four in each case) are indicated in a cursory fashion.

- (17) **Schist palette:** MMA 10.176.78, Rogers Fund. See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length 14.4 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt* I, p. 24, Fig. 17.

DESCRIPTION: The front of the turtle is reduplicated in this unusual specimen, which represents the proboscis more naturally than the preceding example. The shoulder-like conformation of the two front ends of the carapace occurs in several other cases (e.g. W. M. F. Petrie and J. E. Quibell, *Naqada and Ballas*, Pl. 47 [11, 12 (Figure 10, 17a above), 14]). The omission of the forelegs is unusual, as is the orientation of the hind legs, with the claws turned upward.

- (18) **Schist palette:** University Museum, Philadelphia, E. 1232. See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length 12.4 cm.

PROVENANCE: Naqada, tomb 813.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *University Museum Bulletin* 15 (November 1950), p. 24, Fig. 7.

DESCRIPTION: The feet are less conspicuous than in the preceding examples. The proboscis is again in evidence. Two transverse grooves demarcate the head and carapace, probably indicating folds of skin on the retracted neck.

- (19) **Schist palette:** W. M. F. Petrie, *Labyrinth, Gerzeh and Mazghuneh*, Pl. 12 (7). See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length about 10.4 cm.

DESCRIPTION: The feet are still less conspicuous, and the neck again has two transverse grooves. No eyes are indicated.

- (20) **Schist palette:** in private possession. See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length 7.1 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: H. Asselberghs, *Chaos en Behersing*, Pl. 55, Fig. 97 and pp. 322–323.

DESCRIPTION: The projecting feet each show three

claws. There is a pair of incised grooves behind each eye, evidently representing folds of skin on the neck, as in the preceding cases.

- (21) **Schist palette:** W. M. F. Petrie, *Tarkhan II*, Pl. 22 (41 k). See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length about 18 cm.

DESCRIPTION: The feet have been completely omitted. At least two grooves are incised on the neck. Part of the head is apparently broken off.

- (22) **Schist palette:** Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 47.1644. See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length 10.5 cm.

DESCRIPTION: No legs are indicated. The neck shows a single transverse groove.

- (23) **Schist palette:** D. Randall-MacIver and A. C. Mace, *El Amrah and Abydos*, Pl. 8 (1). See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length about 10.5 cm.

DESCRIPTION: The head resembles that of 17 but its contours are less angular. The feet are omitted. This example comes from a tomb (B 62) containing typical red painted ware of Naqada II.

- (24) **Schist palette:** W. M. F. Petrie, *Tarkhan I*, Pl. 26 (8). See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length about 10.4 cm.

DESCRIPTION: The head shows the characteristic shape with projecting snout, but all other detail is omitted, including the eyes. A very late predynastic example.

- (25) **Schist palette:** W. M. F. Petrie and J. E. Quibell, *Naqada and Ballas*, Pl. 47 (16). See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length about 7.6 cm.

DESCRIPTION: The feet are represented upon the surface by means of four series of three lines scratched at the edge. No eyes are indicated (unless they appear on the opposite side, which is not illustrated in the publication).

- (26) **Schist palette:** W. M. F. Petrie and J. E. Quibell, *Naqada and Ballas*, Pl. 47 (18). See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length about 12.2 cm.

DESCRIPTION: Like the preceding example, but more schematic in outline; each foot is represented by four or five scratched lines.

- (27) **Schist palette:** W. M. F. Petrie, *Labyrinth, Gerzeh and Mazghuneh*, Pl. 12 (19). See Figure 10.

DIMENSIONS: Length about 15.1 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Greatly reduced in J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne* I, p. 443, Fig. 296(2). Less accurately in W. M. F. Petrie, *Prehistoric Egypt Corpus*, Pl. 52 (15E).

DESCRIPTION: The forelegs are incised on what – since the eyes are also in view – is apparently the upper surface of the carapace. The hind legs are completely omitted.

**(28) Schist palette:** British Museum 23061. See Figure 10 and Plate 16.

DIMENSIONS: Length 20 cm., width 16 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: E. A. W. Budge, *Egypt in the Neolithic and Archaic Periods (A History of Egypt I)*, p. 60. J. Capart, *Les Debuts de l'art égyptien*, p. 83, Fig. 51; *Primitive Art in Egypt*, p. 86, Fig. 56. J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne I*, p. 381, Fig. 258.

DESCRIPTION: On one side the head shows two hollows for the eyes; on the reverse, which is therefore to be regarded as the underside, the two pairs of legs are rendered by two continuous incised lines that dip rearward at the center, forming a pattern that is highly stylized, yet has an anatomical basis; cf. Plate 1. The two ends of each line are provided with two further scratches so that each foot has three claws.

**(29) Serpentine(?) palette:** University College, London, 19602. See Figure 11 and Plate 7.

DIMENSIONS: Length 7.65 cm., width 6.1 cm., thickness 1.1 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: See footnote 37.

DESCRIPTION: See Section 2, pages 16-17.

## IV Other early figurines

This group includes a very few pre- and protodynastic figurines, one of which is perhaps a macehead (31). Item 29, which has been classified as a palette, might also have been considered here. Other clay figurines besides 30 are possibly to be recognized in A. Lythgoe and D. Dunham, *Naga-ed-Dêr IV*, Fig. 8 (b), but the example described as a toad or tortoise in D. Randall-MacIver and A. C. Mace, *El Amrah and Abydos*, p. 41 (referring to Pl. 9 [5]) is probably a hippopotamus; cf. W. M. F. Petrie, *Prehistoric Egypt*, p. 12. See also 99 and 100.

**(30) Clay figurine:** W. M. F. Petrie, *Diospolis Parva*, Pl. 6 (left top).

DIMENSIONS: Length evidently about 15 cm.

DESCRIPTION: A crudely-fashioned but very realistic representation of Trionyx, with a low, rounded carapace; the head is extended upward at the end of a long neck; the feet, appended to the underside, are visible at the edge of the carapace. The tomb from which this object derives (B 83) also yielded a typical black-topped beaker of Naqada I.

**(31) Macehead(?):** Berlin 15716 (present location unknown). See Plate 16.

MATERIAL: Described by Scharff as mottled white-and-black serpentine, with white spots predominating.

DIMENSIONS: Length 16.6 cm., width 13.8 cm.

PROVENANCE: Acquired in 1901 by Borchardt in Egypt; said to come from Hierakonpolis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: A. Scharff, *Die Allertümer der Vor- und Frühzeit Ägyptens I*, p. 221 (no. 635) and Pl. 21. J. Capart, *Primitive Art in Egypt*, p. 94 and p. 96, Fig. 67.

DESCRIPTION: According to Scharff, the underside is smooth, and the back rounded, flattening off at the sides. A sizable hole, 2.4 cm. in diameter, is bored through the center, becoming narrower toward the top. It is this feature that prompted Capart to describe the figurine as a decorative mace. Scharff suggests that it might have served as the lid of a vessel, but cites no analogous examples of lids with holes in the center. The width and shape of the hole distinctly favor the possibility that it was intended to receive a strong shaft as Capart suggests (cf. sections of maceheads in J. E. Quibell, *Archaic Objects [Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire]*, Pls. 55-56). The complete penetration of the hole makes it unlikely that it was merely intended as a means of securing the figurine upon a tenon (cf. 7, 55, 92, 93).

**(32) Serpentine turtle figurine:** MMA 61.33, gift of Alice Hampshire Silver. See Figure 7 and Plates 4-5.

DIMENSIONS: Length 14.8 cm., width 11.8 cm., thickness 5 cm.

DESCRIPTION: See Section 2, pages 13-14.

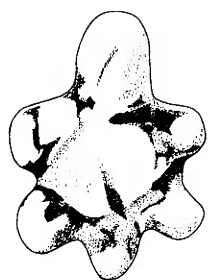
**(33) Serpentine turtle figurine:** MMA 10.130.2605, gift of Helen Miller Gould. See Figure 9 and Plate 6.

DIMENSIONS: Length 8.5 cm., width 7.6 cm., thickness 3.55 cm.

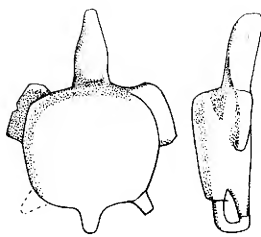
DESCRIPTION: See Section 2, pages 14, 16.

## V Amulets

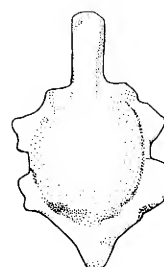
The following list includes all the examples in the Metropolitan Museum, but otherwise is mainly limited to amulets that are of particular interest because of their provenance, date, or form. Figure 17 shows some of the principal shapes. Extremely debased examples sometimes resemble other amulets, such as frogs, beetles, and even the human face: for amulets that may be turtles, frogs, or beetles, see E. Naville, *Cemeteries of Abydos I*, Pl. 7; for an alleged turtle of the New Kingdom that is probably a face, see G. Brunton and R. Engelbach, *Gurob*, Pl. 42 (15 K) and cf. G. Brunton, *Qau and Badari II*, Pl. 93 (class 6). On the other hand, a turtle is perhaps to be recognized in the carnelian amulet identified as “une tête de jeune bovidé aux cornes naissantes” (M. Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos II*, Fig. 259 and pp. 236-237 [no. 9008]); see Figure 18.



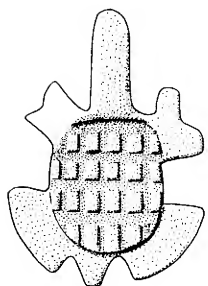
34



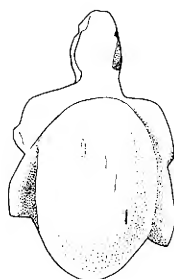
35



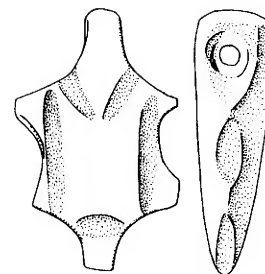
36



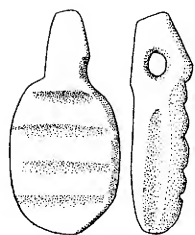
41



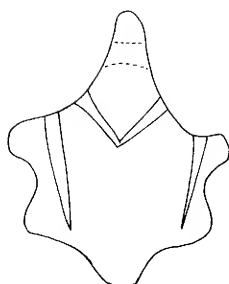
42



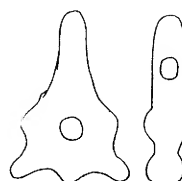
43



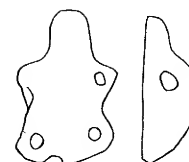
44



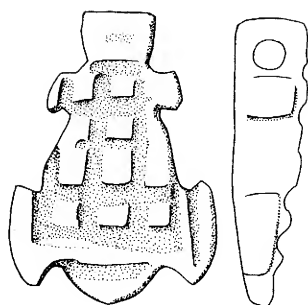
49



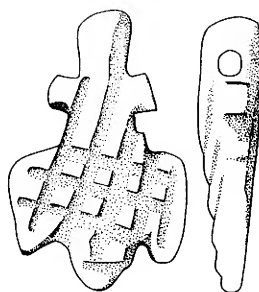
50



51



52



53



68

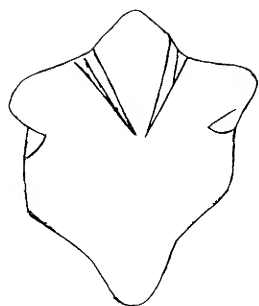


Figure 18

- (34) **Faience (?) amulet:** G. Reisner, *Naga-ed-Dér* III, pp. 133, 209 and Pl. 44 (b). See Figure 17.

COMMENTS: Reisner dates the tomb in question (N 550) to Dyns. III–IV.

- (35) **Gray-black glazed amulet:** G. Brunton, *Mostagedda*, p. 94 and Pl. 57 (43). See Figure 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1.45 cm. From a plundered tomb (1301) that is difficult to date, but judged to be as early as Dyn. IV.

- (36) **Ivory amulet:** Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 11.850; G. Reisner, *Mycerinus*, p. 235 and Pl. 66 (a). See Figure 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1.65 cm. Dated (with other amulets and beads) by location to Dyn. V or early VI.

- (37) **Faience amulet:** G. Reisner, *Naga-ed-Dér* III, pp. 133, 270 and Pl. 43 (b).

COMMENTS: From tomb N 567, dated by Reisner to Dyns. V–VI.

- (38) **Carnelian amulet:** G. Reisner, *Naga-ed-Dér* III, pp. 133, 271 and Pl. 38 (b).

COMMENTS: From tomb N 570 a, about same date as the preceding example.

- (39–41) **Green glazed faience amulets:** G. Reisner, *Naga-ed-Dér* III, pp. 133, 275 and Pl. 42 (a). See Figure 17 for 41.

COMMENTS: From tomb N 615, about same date as preceding.

- (42) **Bone (?) amulet:** G. Reisner, *Naga-ed-Dér* III, pp. 133, 304 and Pl. 42 (c). See Figure 17.

COMMENTS: The material is called bone, *ibid.*, p. 133, ivory on p. 304. From tomb N 780, about same date as preceding.

- (43) **Carnelian amulet:** G. Brunton, *Matmar*, Pl. 32 (57). See Figure 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1.65 cm. From tomb 3220, dated to Dyn. VI.

- (44) **Blue glazed amulet:** G. Brunton, *Qau and Badari I*, Pl. 48 (tomb 5534, no. 74Q3). See Figure 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1.45 cm. From tomb 5534, dated to Dyn. VI. This is probably a stylized representation of a turtle, reduced to head and carapace, but its identification is not beyond doubt. A smaller and even more stylized blue glazed example of similar date might be recognized in G. Brunton, *Matmar*, Pl. 32 (80, 58 P).

- (45–46) **Two amulets of unspecified material:** J. Garstang, *Mahásna and Bêt Khalláf*, Pl. 39 (lower left, second row from bottom).

COMMENTS: Resemble 43. From Mahasna, tomb 461, late Old Kingdom.

- (47) **Bone amulet:** MMA 59.100.11, Rogers Fund. See Frontispiece.

COMMENTS: Length 1.8 cm. Belongs to a purchased group of bone amulets of late Old Kingdom type.

- (48) **Bone amulet:** MMA 65.46.14, Rogers Fund. See Frontispiece.

COMMENTS: Length 1.25 cm. The nose is broken off. Belongs to a purchased group of bone amulets of late Old Kingdom type.

- (49) **Carnelian amulet:** R. Engelbach, *Harageh*, Pls. 9 (9) and 49 (15 G). See Figure 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1.78 cm. From tomb 188, dated to Dyn. VI, *ibid.*, p. 9.

- (50) **Green glazed amulet:** R. Engelbach, *Harageh*, Pl. 49 (15 K). See Figure 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1.1 cm. From tomb 231, dated to First Intermediate Period, *ibid.*, p. 9. Apparently has a boss in the center.

- (51) **Blue glazed amulet:** R. Engelbach, *Harageh*, Pl. 49 (15 N). See Figure 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1 cm. From tomb 231 (cf. preceding example). Apparently has markings like 68.

- (52) **Blue glazed amulet:** G. Brunton, *Matmar*, Pl. 32 (58). See Figure 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1.9 cm. From tomb 432, dated to Dyn. VIII.

- (53) **Blue glazed amulet:** G. Brunton, *Matmar*, Pl. 32 (59). See Figure 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1.85 cm. From tomb 602, dated to Dyn. IX.

- (54) **Gold amulet:** Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 15.246 a–b; R. Engelbach, *Harageh*, Pl. 22 (2) and p. 13. See Plate 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1.1 cm., width 0.9 cm. From grave 154, dated to Dyn. XII. Made of two thin shells of gold that join at the edge to form the top and (flatter) underside. Engelbach is probably right in describing this as a turtle, despite its resemblance to some of the representations of pendants discussed by M. Murray in *Ancient Egypt* (1917), pp. 55–56; and cf. drawings in L. Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten*, pp. 3, 52, 109 (Cairo Cat. 3, 58, 150). The head is merely a flattened protrusion, but there are traces of what seem to be a pair of eyes. Plate 17 shows the upper and lower halves separately (right side); beside these (at left) is half of a similar object said to come from the same tomb, MFA 15.247. The length of the latter is 1.1 cm., its width 0.8 cm.

- (55) **Amethyst amulet:** MMA 26.7.1359, gift of Edward S. Harkness. See Frontispiece and Plate 19.

COMMENTS: The length is 4.7 cm., height 1.5 cm., width 3.5 cm. The back is covered with 108 shallow pits about 0.2 cm. in diameter, several of which retain inlaid disks of turquoise, red jasper, and lapis lazuli. The eyes are indicated by similar pits, from which the inlay has been lost. A hole for suspension has been drilled through the neck, carved in the form of the loop it was meant to accommodate. This feature identifies the object as an amulet, but at one time or another it was evidently affixed to a base, for there is a hole in the underside 0.4 cm. in diameter at the surface and 0.6 cm. in maximum depth. Cf. 7 above and more particularly the two Middle Kingdom turtles of somewhat lesser size that belong to an ensemble of magical figurines (92–93). The amethyst turtle was purchased in Cairo and passed into the Carnarvon Collection. It was said to have derived from “the first Dendera treasure, discovered and stolen by the local inhabitants in the fall of 1914” and was accordingly attributed to the “Early Ptolemaic period” by P. Newberry and H. R. Hall in *Ancient Egyptian Art* (Burlington Fine Arts Club Exhibition Catalogue, 1922), p. 19 (no. 8). If one discounts the dubious evidence for the provenance, however, it seems much more likely that the date is Middle Kingdom, when amethyst enjoyed its greatest popularity in Egyptian minor art. The closest parallels for the inlaid pattern are two late predynastic stone frogs that have similar depressions on their backs, in one case filled with chips of lapis lazuli (Brooklyn Museum 57.165.4 and University of California 6-17171, the second in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 11 [1952], p. 242 and Pl. 23,

and A. Lythgoe and D. Dunham, *Naga-ed-Dêr* IV, Figs. 78 [g], 79 [a]). A parallel considerably closer to the proposed date is provided by a wooden turtle of the Second Intermediate Period that has 23 holes in its back, possibly to accommodate the peglike counters used for the game of “hounds and jackals” (see 96 below). As some of the following evidence indicates (66–68), turtle amulets probably continued in use until the Eighteenth Dynasty, but there is no clear evidence for them beyond that point. No. 71 may be an exception, but one that is probably later than the pharaonic traditions that persisted into Greco-Roman times.

- (56) **Amethyst amulet:** MMA 10.130.2399, gift of Helen Miller Gould. See Frontispiece.

COMMENTS: Length 0.5 cm. Formerly in the Murch Collection, and probably one of the two amethyst specimens mentioned by W. M. F. Petrie in *Amulets*, p. 48. The choice of material is again suggestive of the Middle Kingdom.

- (57) **Amethyst amulet:** MMA 10.130.2400, gift of Helen Miller Gould. See Frontispiece.

COMMENTS: Length 0.6 cm. Formerly in the Murch Collection; cf. comments on preceding example.

- (58) **Quartz and hematite amulet:** MMA 10.130.2398, gift of Helen Miller Gould. See Frontispiece.

COMMENTS: Length 1.9 cm. Formerly in the Murch Collection. Date uncertain. Probably the “porphyry” specimen mentioned by W. M. F. Petrie in *Amulets*, p. 48.

- (59) **Carnelian amulet:** University College, London; W. M. F. Petrie, *Amulets*, p. 47, Pl. 41 (239 a).

COMMENTS: H. S. Smith informs me that the material is very fine orange-red carnelian with deep red flecks, and not brown agate as published. Length 2.3 cm. The hole for suspension is about one-third down the back. Date uncertain.

- (60) **Carnelian amulet:** University College, London; W. M. F. Petrie, *Amulets*, p. 47, Pl. 41 (239 b).

COMMENTS: H. S. Smith describes the color as orange opaque carnelian of rather poor quality. Length 1.5 cm. The hole for suspension is exactly as in the preceding example. Date uncertain.

- (61–62) **Two carnelian amulets:** in private possession; L. Keimer, *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 56(1957), pp. 118–119 and Fig. 17.

COMMENTS: Length 0.08 cm. It is suggested that the red color is “typhonic.”

(63) **Carnelian amulet:** MMA 10.130.2397, gift of Helen Miller Gould. See Frontispiece.

COMMENTS: Length 2.2 cm. Formerly in the Murch Collection. Date uncertain. Probably one of the carnelian examples mentioned by W. M. F. Petrie in *Amulets*, p. 48.

(64) **Carnelian amulet:** Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, E.G.A. 3206.1943.

COMMENTS: Length 2.4 cm. Formerly in the Gayer-Anderson Collection. Date uncertain.

(65) **Carnelian amulet:** British Museum 35114.

COMMENTS: Length 2.3 cm. Part of a necklace that is attributed to the New Kingdom. The provenance is unknown, however, and whatever the date of the rest of the necklace may be, it is not certain that the turtle amulet originally belonged to it.

(66) **Carnelian amulet:** Brooklyn Museum 14.644. See Plate 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1.45 cm., width 0.9 cm., height 0.6 cm. From the Egypt Exploration Society's excavations at Sawama, near Akhmim, tomb 9. Although this tomb is not precisely datable by other finds, the material from the rest of the cemetery is predominantly early Eighteenth Dynasty; see the brief reports of T. Whittemore in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 1 (1914), pp. 246–247 and in G. Wainwright, *Balabish*, p. v.

(67) **Stone amulet:** Carnarvon and H. Carter, *Five Years' Explorations at Thebes*, p. 82(62).

COMMENTS: The amulet is not illustrated, but is described as a "brown stone turtle" at the center of a child's necklace composed of faience beads and amulets. The burial belongs to the Second Intermediate Period.

(68) **Dark green faience amulet:** formerly MMA 11.215.197, Rogers Fund. See Figure 17 and Plate 17.

COMMENTS: This item was deaccessioned in 1957. The length is 0.8 cm. The head, from which it was originally suspended, is broken off. It derives from the Metropolitan Museum's excavations in 1910–1911 at the Palace of Amenophis III in western Thebes, and presumably belongs to the Eighteenth Dynasty. Figure 17 (bottom right) is taken from a drawing made from the original shortly after it was found.

(69) **Gold amulet:** Brooklyn Museum 16.324. See Plate 17.

COMMENTS: The length is 0.9 cm., the width 0.6 cm. The back shows a cross-hatched pattern. The underside is provided with a loop for suspension. This example was bought by C. E. Wilbour near Rissia in 1889 and was

apparently excavated a short distance east of Hu; see his letters (*Travels in Egypt*), p. 525. Its date is uncertain.

(70) **Gold amulet:** *Description de l'Égypte* V, Pl. 59 (26–27); X, p. 565. See Plate 18.

COMMENTS: Assuming that the drawings are actual size, which seems likely, the maximum length is 9 cm. As in the case of at least one of the amulets listed previously (35), this pendant was suspended upside down, being provided with a loop at the rear end. Its stylized spade-shaped head does not resemble Trionyx, nor do its feet, which are simply projecting pairs of thick wires. The Nile turtle is probably to be recognized, however, in view of the length of its neck (encased in coiled wire to imitate folds of skin), the width of its carapace, and the pattern of isolated spirals and rivets that covers the latter. This pattern, imitating the characteristic spots and tubercles, may be compared to 55 above. The row of granules along the edge is also reminiscent of the markings of Trionyx. No information is provided concerning the provenance except that it was found in Egypt, and its date is almost equally problematic. Petrie evidently considered that it might be as early as the Middle Kingdom, for he states that turtle amulets are "Prehistoric to XIIth dynasty (?)," and the present example is specifically mentioned (*Amulets*, pp. 47–48). The use of gold-wire spirals and granulation is in fact known from the Middle Kingdom, but at this period the wire spirals are usually open, and not mounted on a sheet of gold as seems evident from the engraving in the *Description*. On the other hand, the smoothness of the wire is not particularly characteristic of the Greco-Roman Period, nor is the use of rivets for fastening the spirals. The earliest satisfactory parallel I have been able to find occurs on two bracelets from the tomb of Tutankhamun (256 rr, ww; cf. Plate 18 below, and H. Carter, *Tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen* II, Pl. 86), where series of running S-spirals in gold wire are mounted on a gold backing, each spiral being secured by a rivet in the center and additional rivets, or granules, filling the intervening spaces. But almost precisely the same thing occurs on a Ptolemaic (or only slightly earlier) disk-shaped pendant in the Metropolitan Museum (23.2.41), where there are again rivets in the center of some of the spirals, and the granules between the spirals are contiguous to the wire. From these parallels one can in any case conclude that the style and workmanship are Egyptian, and that the date is probably later than the Middle Kingdom.

(71) **Black serpentine amulet:** University College, London. See Plate 17.

COMMENTS: The description of the material is taken from W. M. F. Petrie, *Amulets*, p. 47 (239 b 3; H. S. Smith informs me that the other "black serpentine" specimen, 239 b 2, is blue glass, and probably a scarab). The length is 3.45 cm., width 2.8 cm., thickness 0.8 cm.

The neck is perforated for suspension. The material and the pattern of nucleated circles on the back suggest that the date may be Roman or even later. Compare, for example, BM 2896, a medallion, *Catalogue of Jewellery in the British Museum*, Pl. 68, or Cairo Cat. 8902, an ivory hairpin with a turtle at one end, the back perforated with holes, J. Strzygowski, *Koptische Kunst*, Pl. 19 and p. 207, where this item is related to hairpins from Luxor that are assigned to the fifth or sixth century of our era. On the other hand, nucleated circles appear on Twelfth Dynasty scarabs and inlays, and this particular pattern may have been suggested by a Middle Kingdom prototype such as 55.

## VI Button seals

All of the following examples presumably belong to the end of the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period.

- (72) **Black steatite seal, with loop on back:** W. M. F. Petrie, *Buttons and Design Scarabs*, Pls. 3, 20 (173) and p. 6. See Figure 19.

COMMENTS: Breadth about 2 cm. A turtle is incised on the underside, without any interior detail.

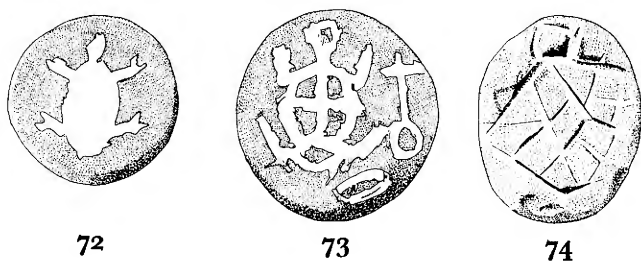
- (73) **Black steatite seal, with loop on back:** W. M. F. Petrie, *Buttons and Design Scarabs*, Pl. 20 (174); *A History of Egypt I* (revised ed., 1923), p. 120, Fig. 73. See Figure 19.

COMMENTS: Breadth about 2.4 cm. A turtle is incised on the underside, with a few lines indicating the pattern of the carapace. This is accompanied by the signs  $\dagger$   $\Leftarrow$  i.e. *nfr*, “beautiful,” or *nfr-r*, “beautiful of mouth” – evidently a euphemistic epithet.

- (74) **Limestone seal, with loop on back:** W. M. F. Petrie, *Buttons and Design Scarabs*, Pl. 20 (175). See Figure 19.

COMMENTS: Breadth about 2.3 cm. A turtle is crudely incised on the underside, with feet omitted; the pattern of the carapace is indicated by an irregular network of lines.

Figure 19



72

73

74

- (75) **Schist seal, with loop on back:** W. M. F. Petrie, *Buttons and Design Scarabs*, Pls. 6, 20 (174 A).

COMMENTS: Breadth about 1.2 cm. A turtle is incised on the underside without interior detail.

- (76) **Green faience seal, back in form of turtle:** British Museum 23297. See Figure 8 and Plate 17.

COMMENTS: Length 1.8 cm., width 1.5 cm. No provenance is recorded. The two front legs of the turtle project beyond the front of the carapace, and between them is the snouted head. The carapace is covered with an incised cross-hatched pattern. I. E. S. Edwards informs me that the underside bears the following design: this probably represents a lizard or beetle above a much-degenerated version of the double-ibex motif (cf. G. Brunton, *Mostagedda*, Pl. 60 [20]).



## VII Magical wands of hippopotamus ivory

The form of this type of object has plausibly been thought to derive from a knife (G. Steindorff, “The Magical Knives of Ancient Egypt” in *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 9 [1946], pp. 41–42, n. 2), although it has also been compared to ivory clappers (H. E. Winlock, *Treasure of El Lahun*, p. 43). As van de Walle has noted (*La Nouvelle Cléo* 5 [1953], p. 178), the examples that include the turtle usually show this animal at the end of the procession (77–79, 85, 87) or at the head (82, 84, 88, 89), but in one case (91) a toad keeps it from the very front and in three cases (80, 81, 86) it occupies the penultimate position. This arrangement is probably not particularly meaningful, but is merely dictated by considerations of space. In the one instance where the turtle is located nearer to the center of the group (83), its scale is reduced so that it fills a gap between two mythical felines. Most of these examples derive from the Middle Kingdom, but the production of magical wands continued into the New Kingdom. The realistic crisscrossed pattern of the carapace in ten cases (79–88) may be compared with that of a wooden figurine and two steatite figurines of the same period (96, 92, 93). As in the case of other representations from tombs and temples, the number of claws is seldom observed very accurately, but they are often indicated by little more than a series of parallel lines, and it is sometimes difficult to say whether the claws are the lines themselves or the intervening spaces. I am indebted to Nora Scott’s files for the inclusion of 81 and 88.

- (77) **Ivory wand:** MMA 22.1.154, Rogers Fund. See Figure 5.

DIMENSIONS: Length of larger segment 26.7 cm., length of small piece 4.4 cm.

PROVENANCE: Lisht, North Pyramid, pit 885. Museum excavations 1920–1921.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: A. C. Mace, "The Egyptian Expedition 1920–1921: Excavations at Lisht" in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 16 (1921), Pt. II, p. 16, Fig. 17. G. Steindorff in *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 9 (1946), p. 46 and p. 51, Fig. 10. W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt* I, p. 249, Fig. 159.

DESCRIPTION: The surface of the turtle's carapace is realistically conveyed by means of a stippled pattern. The head is probably shown in profile, as usual.

(78) **Section of ivory wand:** G. Loud, *Megiddo* II (University of Chicago, Oriental Institute Publications 62), Pl. 203.

DIMENSIONS: Length of segment about 9.5 cm.

PROVENANCE: Megiddo, stratum VII (Eighteenth Dynasty), but may be of earlier date.

DESCRIPTION: The carapace is stippled, as in the preceding example, and is pointed at the rear, in the form of a tail.

(79) **Smoke-blackened ivory wand:** MMA 19.2.18, Rogers Fund. See Figure 5.

DIMENSIONS: Length 21 cm. (one end missing).

DESCRIPTION: A tail is again indicated (as also in the comparable examples 80–83). The carapace, neck, and legs are covered with a horizontal and vertical network of lines (diagonally crisscrossed on the neck). The head, viewed in profile, has a convincingly long proboscis.

(80) **Fragment of an ivory wand:** Berlin 8176.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: F. Legge, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 27 (1905), Pl. 16 (Fig. 40), following p. 152.

DESCRIPTION: Very similar to example 79, except that the cross-hatched design does not cover the legs. The turtle is separated from the terminal element by a gazelle's head.

(81) **Ivory wand:** Brussels E 7063.

DIMENSIONS: 18 cm.

DESCRIPTION: Resembles the foregoing example, and occupies the same position in the procession of magical creatures.

(82) **Ivory wand:** Manchester 1800.

DIMENSIONS: Length 28 cm.

PROVENANCE: Middle Kingdom tomb beneath store-rooms associated with the mortuary temple of Ramesses II in western Thebes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: J. E. Quibell, *The Ramesseum*, Pl. 3 (3).

F. Legge, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 28 (1906), Pl. 6 (Fig. 60), following p. 164.

DESCRIPTION: Similar to the three preceding examples.

(83) **Ivory wand:** Liverpool Public Museum.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: F. Legge, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 28 (1906), Pl. 3 (Fig. 51), following p. 162.

DESCRIPTION: Again rather similar to the foregoing examples, but the legs are covered with striations and each foot is tapered to a single point. The unusual position of the turtle has already been noted in the general remarks.

(84) **Segment of ivory wand:** Brussels E 293.

DIMENSIONS: Length 20.5 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: J. Capart, *Bulletin des Musées Royaux* (August 1909), pp. 62–63 and Fig. 19; *Une Donation d'antiquités égyptiennes aux Musées Royaux de Bruxelles*, p. 45 and Fig. 19 (c).

DESCRIPTION: Rather like the preceding examples, but with diagonal cross-hatching on the carapace, and without any indication of a tail.

(85) **Ivory wand:** British Museum 58794.

DIMENSIONS: Length 26.5 cm.

PROVENANCE: Purchased in Luxor.

DESCRIPTION: The carapace again is similar to the preceding, and again shows diagonal cross-hatching. The turtle is the last of the series of figures, but its orientation is reversed so that it appears to be going backward (cf. 89).

(86) **Ivory wand:** Louvre N. 1489.

DIMENSIONS: Length 25 cm., width 3.5 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: F. Legge, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 27 (1905), Pl. 9 (Fig. 15), following p. 152.

DESCRIPTION: Similar to the preceding, with diagonal pattern of cross-hatching on the carapace. The feet are simplified into radiating groups of short parallel lines. In this example the turtle is separated from the terminal element by three snakes, two of which are intertwined.

(87) **Ivory wand:** Cairo Cat. 9437.

DIMENSIONS: Length 32 cm., width 5 cm.

PROVENANCE: Dra Abu'l Nega, tomb of Neferhotep, cleared January 1860 (the same tomb that yielded the turtle gameboard, 96 below); see B. Porter and R. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography* I, Pt. II, p. 604. Apparently this tomb, which contained a *rishi* coffin, is as late as the Seventeenth Dynasty.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: G. Daressy, *Textes et Dessins magiques (Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du*



Caire), Pl. 12 and p. 46. F. Legge, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 27 (1905), Pl. 9 (Fig. 16), following p. 152. W. M. F. Petrie, *Objects of Daily Use*, Pl. 37 (L) (mistakenly attributed to the British Museum). F. Lexa, *La Magie dans l'Égypte antique* III, Pl. 51, Fig. 86.

DESCRIPTION: The representation of the turtle is almost identical to the preceding example.

**(88) Segment of ivory wand:** Brussels E 7064.

DIMENSIONS: Length 9.5 cm.

DESCRIPTION: Like the preceding example. The front end, including the turtle's head, is missing.

**(89) Ivory wand:** Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 20.1780.

DIMENSIONS: Length 19.2 cm. (extreme ends broken off).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: G. Reisner, *Kerma I–III*, p. 140; *Kerma IV–V*, p. 260 and Pl. 53 (1), no. 5. From Tumulus K III.

DESCRIPTION: Represented in outline, with rounded feet. It is not certain whether the head is viewed from the top or in profile. The turtle leads the procession of magical figures, but its orientation is reversed, so that it faces inward (cf. 85).

**(90) Fragment of an ivory wand:** formerly in the collection of Wilhelm Spiegelberg.

PROVENANCE: Bought in Luxor; said to come from Dra Abu'l Nega.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: F. Legge, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 28 (1906), Pl. 3 (Fig. 52), following p. 162.

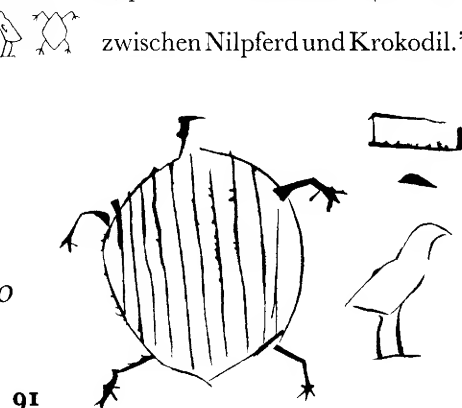
DESCRIPTION: The surface is not sufficiently well preserved to enable one to ascertain any details other than the fact that the turtle has a particularly long, pointed nose. The scale and location of the turtle suggest that it may have occupied a more or less central position, as in the case of 83.

**(91) Ivory wand:** formerly in the collection of William MacGregor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: F. Legge, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 27 (1905), Pl. 3 (Fig. 48), following p. 302.

DESCRIPTION: The turtle is represented quite differently in this case, with an extremely thin head and limbs, and a series of longitudinal lines on the carapace. In view of these details, as well as the vertical arrangement, it seems possible that a beetle was originally intended, but there can be no mistake about its identification since the figure is preceded by the word *štw*, “turtle” (Figure 20). The turtle is near the front of the row of magical figures, preceded only by a toad. Another example like this one (or possibly the same?) is indicated by A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache*, IV, *Belegstellen, autographierter Teil*, p. 111: “Zauberstab <im Handel><sup>MR</sup> zwischen Nilpferd und Krokodil.”

Figure 20



## VIII Other objects of the Middle Kingdom

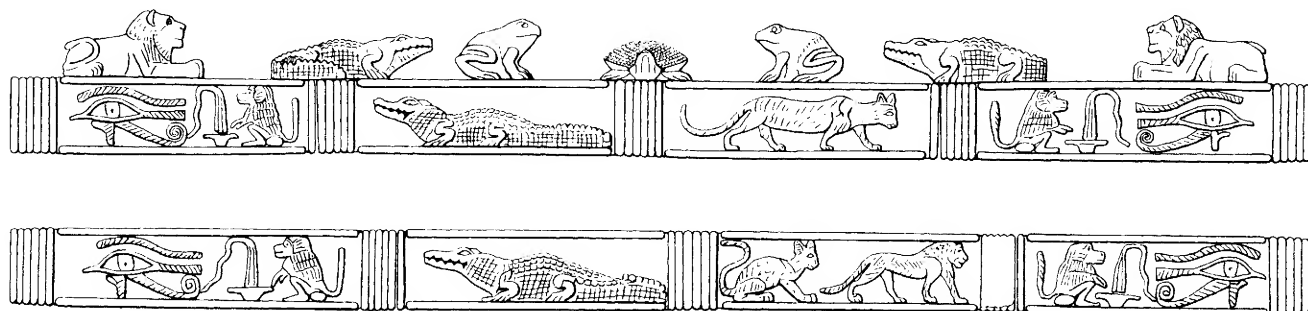
In the first four of the following examples the turtle again appears in a magical context.

**(92) Steatite turtle figurine in a row of animals on a magical rod:** MMA 26.7.1275 H, gift of Edward S. Harkness. See Figure 21, Plate 19, and Frontispiece.

DIMENSIONS: Length of ensemble 27.5 cm., length of turtle 2.6 cm.

PROVENANCE: From the Carnarvon Collection. Purchased in Cairo; said to come from a vaulted tomb near Heliopolis.

Figure 21



BIBLIOGRAPHY: P. Newberry and H. R. Hall, *Ancient Egyptian Art* (Burlington Fine Arts Club Exhibition Catalogue, 1922), p. 83 (no. 8) and Pl. 19. D. W. Phillips, *Ancient Egyptian Animals* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art Picture Book), p. 1, Fig. 2. W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt* I, p. 228, Fig. 143.

DESCRIPTION: A convincing representation of Trionyx, with the back scored diagonally to give the effect of raised tubercles; compare the cross-hatched patterns of the turtles on Middle Kingdom ivory wands (79–88). The other figurines in the same group include two recumbent lions, two crocodiles, and two toads (probably *Bufo regularis*; cf. J. Anderson, *Zoology of Egypt* I, pp. 353–356). In every case the underside of the figurines shows a hole that originally contained a wooden tenon, the other end of which fitted into a corresponding hole on the top of the segmented base. All of these elements were green glazed.

**(93) Stone turtle figurine in a group of animals:**  
Beirut Museum.

DIMENSIONS: Length 2.2 cm.

PROVENANCE: Djebail, Lebanon; from deposit in procella of the temple with obelisks.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: M. Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos* II, p. 767 and Pl. 98 (1).

DESCRIPTION: Dunand identifies the stone as “calcaire métamorphique.” The carapace of the turtle shows incised cross-hatching, as in the preceding example. Evidently the entire group must have been almost identical to the one in the Metropolitan Museum, for it includes two recumbent lions, a crocodile, and a toad. All have holes in the bottom and in one case (a lion) the tenon is still in position.

**(94) Segment of steatite magical rod:** British Museum 22892. See Plate 19.

DIMENSIONS: Length 5.35 cm.

DESCRIPTION: Like other examples of the same kind (e.g. 92–93 above), this segment is hollow, and probably was glazed (although no trace of the glaze is now discernible), and there are two round holes in the upper surface to receive tenons for the attachment of figures. Again as in other cases, both sides show identical reliefs, but this example is exceptional in that the reliefs display a turtle and a toad. I am indebted to Professor van de Walle for bringing this piece to my attention, and to Dr. Edwards for supplying a photograph and other data that enabled it to be identified beyond any doubt. Dr. Edwards also states that the sign  $\dagger$  seems to have been roughly scratched on the upper surface between the two holes (cf. 73).

**(95) Faience feeding cup for a child:** MMA 44.4.4, Rogers Fund. See Plate 20.

DIMENSIONS: Length 8 cm., height 3.5 cm.

PROVENANCE: Lisht, North Pyramid site, found in a toilet basket in surface debris of the west cemetery. Metropolitan Museum Excavations 1906–1907.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: N. E. Scott, *Home Life of the Ancient Egyptians* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art Picture Book), Fig. 30. W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt* I, p. 247.

DESCRIPTION: The flat surface of the rim is pierced with six holes, spaced at more or less regular intervals; these were perhaps intended to secure a lid by means of tenons. The projecting spout is penetrated by a larger hole, so that the contents could be poured even if such a lid were tightly attached. A surrounding frieze of apotropaic creatures, all painted black on blue, is headed by the turtle, which appears on either side of the spout. This representation shows the same shoulder-like conformation of the anterior end of the carapace that has been observed in some of the protodynastic examples. The interior detail of the carapace is reduced to three diagonal lines, and the distinctive border of the pattern is exaggerated. The head is shown in profile. As Dr. Hayes has noted (*ibid.*), the interpretation of this object as a nursing cup is supported by the fact that terracotta cups of similar type have been found in Middle Kingdom infant burials at Lisht (MMA 19.3.127) and Thebes (MMA 09.180.768c). These cups have open spouts, but obviously served the same function.

**(96) Wooden gameboard (?) in form of a turtle:**  
Cairo Cat. 44414. See Plate 20.

DIMENSIONS: Length 5.5 cm.

PROVENANCE: Dra Abu'l Nega, tomb of Neferhotep (cf. 87 above).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: G. Bénédite, *Objets de toilette* I (*Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*), pp. 19–20 and Pl. 10.

DESCRIPTION: The head has the elongated nose that is characteristic of Trionyx and there are folds on the neck. The pattern of tubercles on the carapace is realistically rendered by a close network of incised lines in which Bénédite observed traces of blue pigment, and there is a well-defined margin around the edge. There are some less accurate features, however, such as the elongated form of the carapace, its straight anterior end (cf. 5), and a pair of inward-curving grooves at the end opposite (cf. the ventral side of 33). No feet are visible and the underside is evidently flat. Twenty-three holes have been cut into the original pattern, arranged in five longitudinal rows, the central three containing five each, and each of the outermost pair containing four. For this reason Bénédite has associated the figurine with a group of animal-headed pegs found in the same tomb, all of which presumably fit the series of holes to some extent. After describing the pegs as hairpins and the turtle as a “pelote” (pincushion), he ultimately decided to identify them as a game, and the same idea has been suggested by L. Klebs (*Reliefs und Malerei* II, p. 150) and B. van de Walle (*La Nouvelle Clé* 5 [1953], p. 175). The use of the turtle in this connection

would, in fact, be paralleled by a gameboard in the shape of a frog or toad (Louvre: illustrated by G. Brunton, *Sediment I*, Pl. 22). There are, however, some difficulties that raise considerable doubt. All the other gameboards of similar type have four lanes of holes, so arranged that they form two routes for the gamepieces, and in every case some of the holes are distinguished from the rest to indicate a particularly advantageous (or disadvantageous) move. Although the animal-headed pegs are rightly interpreted as gamepieces, the set is very incomplete, for there is only one "jackal" in place of the five that are normally opposed to the five "hounds" (cf. W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt I*, p. 250). This being the case, it seems possible that the gameboard to which they originally belonged is likewise missing. If so, the holes in the back of the turtle may simply be intended to represent its spotted pattern, although it must be conceded that they are unnecessarily deep for that purpose; at all events they recall the round inlays of 55 and the nucleated circles of 71.

(97) **Terracotta bowl with incised design:** Manchester 7397. See Plate 20.

DIMENSIONS: Diameter 27.8 cm.

PROVENANCE: Excavations of the British School of Archaeology at Qau.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: W. M. F. Petrie, *Antaeopolis*, p. 15 and Pl. 21 (4); *The Making of Egypt*, Pl. 68 (mistakenly attributed to University College on p. 181). W. Kronig in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 5 (1934), p. 147 and Pl. 24 b. T. Burton-Brown, *Early Mediterranean Migrations*, Pl. 2.

DESCRIPTION: The dish belongs to a well-known type

of Middle Kingdom incised ware (cf. Kronig, *loc. cit.*, pp. 146–147) that frequently displays a more or less conventionalized fish at the center; in this case the tail is reduplicated at either end. At one end, flanking the shorter of the two tails, are an unidentified quadruped and a headless turtle, the back of which is filled with a crisscrossed pattern. This occurrence of the turtle may be compared with the examples on predynastic bowls (the first three items in the present list).

(98) **Four ivory inlays:** probably in the Khartoum Museum. See Figure 22, showing two.

DIMENSIONS: Maximum height 6.2 cm.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: G. Reisner, *Kerma I–III*, p. 484 (Tumulus K XV, chapel D, floor debris); *Kerma IV–V*, p. 270 (no. 21) and Pl. 56 (1).

COMMENTS: These inlays are thought to belong to the footboard of a bed, as seen from numerous other inlays from the same site (cf. W. S. Smith, *Ancient Egypt as Represented in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 4th ed. [1960], pp. 100–101, Figs. 63, 64). The repertory of such inlays includes Toeris, and the turtle was probably similarly included for magical protection as well as for decoration.

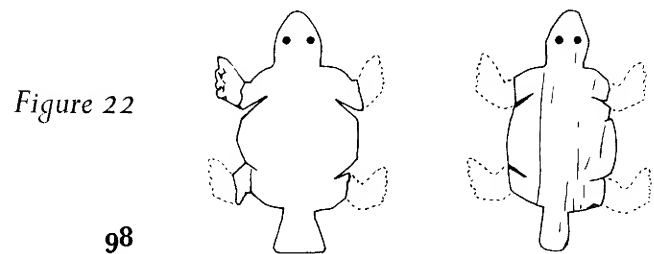


Figure 22

98

## Addenda

(99) **Turtle figurine:** in the possession of Richard Falkiner. See Plate 7.

MATERIAL: Described by Mr. Falkiner as "a pinkish veined stone."

DIMENSIONS: Length 7.7 cm., width 4.8 cm., height 3 cm.

PROVENANCE: Recently purchased in Samsun (Amisos), Turkey.

DESCRIPTION: The pattern of concentric rings and star-like radiating lines resembles that of 32, but the rings have not been made by means of a compass, for they conform to the shape of the carapace, which is unusually elongated. Mr. Falkiner reports that the feet are "very schematically carved." He also observes that the back and head are damaged, and that the surface "almost certainly has been hit with a small, hard object all over, particularly round the head," but adds that "it is difficult to be absolutely certain about this."

(100) **Turtle figurine:** in the possession of K. J. Stern. See Plate 7.

MATERIAL: Described by Richard Falkiner, who provided the photograph reproduced here with Dr. Stern's permission, as "green and black stone."

DIMENSIONS: Length 9 cm., width 7 cm.

PROVENANCE: None recorded.

DESCRIPTION: The carapace is characteristically broad, and the anterior end is unrealistically flattened, with a suggestion of shoulder-like protuberances, both features being known from several other examples of various periods (5, 76, 96; 17, 17a, 32, 95). The eyes are indicated by shallow pits and the legs are formed in a manner that is reminiscent of the protodynastic vessel in Brussels (6), although they are more stylized. The material and general style indicate that the date of this statuette is also protodynastic.

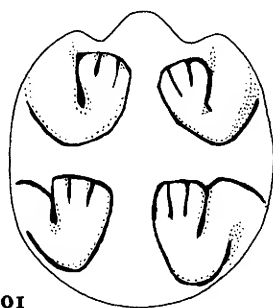
(101) **Turtle figurine:** Buffalo Museum of Natural Sciences C16400. See Plate 3.

**MATERIAL:** Porphyritic diorite.

**DIMENSIONS:** Length 12 cm., width 11.3 cm., height 4.8 cm.

**PROVENANCE:** None recorded.

**DESCRIPTION:** The anterior end of the carapace is decidedly concave, resulting in a pair of protuberances that are more salient than they are in any of the comparable examples cited above. The nose is blunt, and the eyes are represented in rounded relief (cf. 11, 29). All four feet plainly display three toes, as shown in the accompanying drawing, and the legs turn inward very much as they do on the larger of the two serpentine turtles in the Metropolitan Museum (32). The date assigned to the latter figurine is supported by the recurrence of this feature in the newly discovered specimen, associated as it is with all the characteristics of protodynastic workmanship, including the choice of material.



101

(102) **Silver and gold bracelet:** British Museum 24787.

**DIMENSIONS:** External diameter 8–8.2 cm.; internal diameter 5.7–6.4 cm. Maximum breadth of band 1.15 cm.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** *British Museum Guide to the Third and Fourth Egyptian Rooms* (1904), no. 140 on p. 216; *Guide to the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Egyptian Rooms, and the Coptic Room* (1922), no. 140 on p. 90. In both cases identified as a "bangle." I owe these references to Alix Macfarlane.

**PROVENANCE:** Unknown; purchased in 1901.

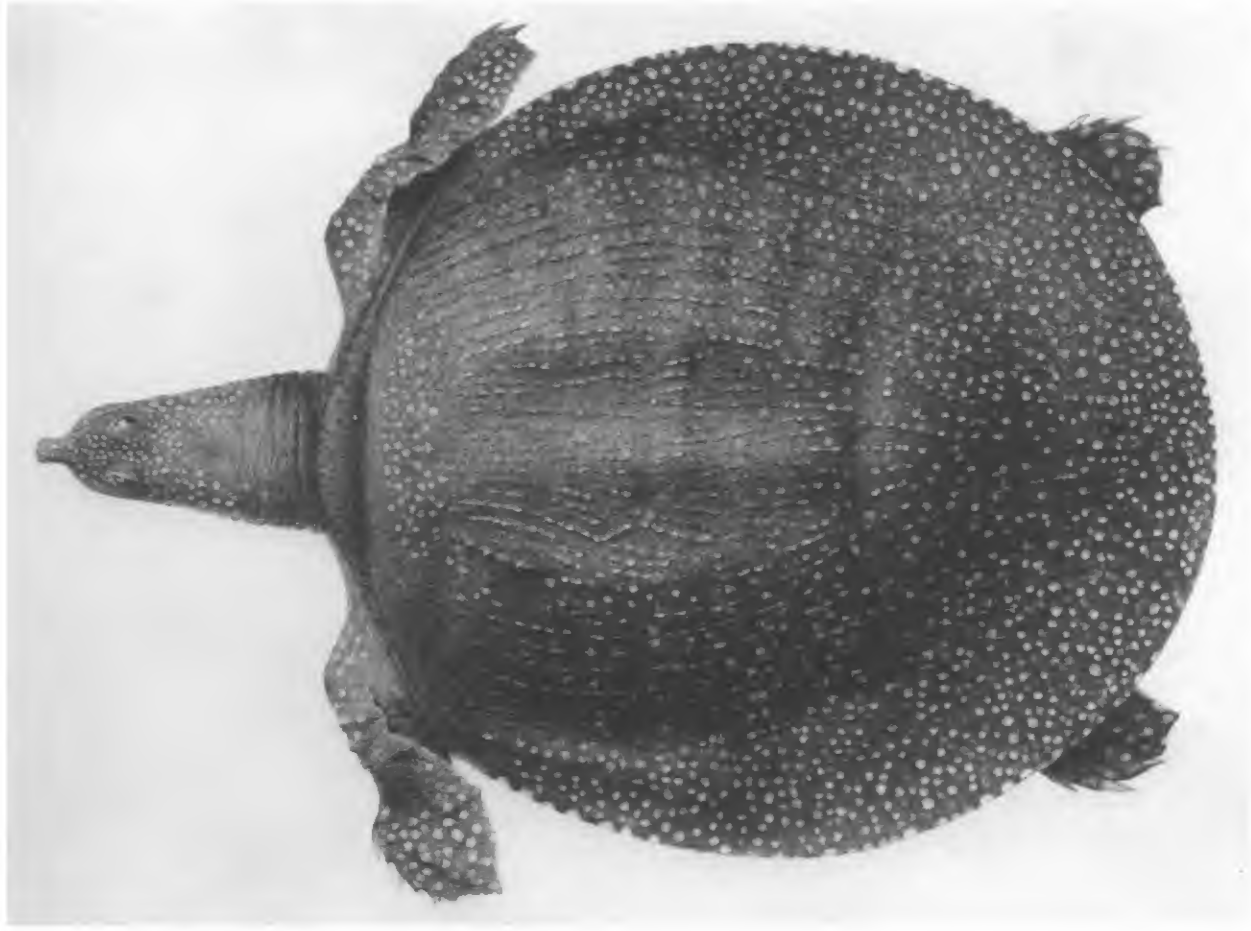
**DESCRIPTION:** Evidently the form of the bracelet, with two tapering ends that overlap and can be spread apart, is to be compared with the bracelets listed above in footnote 14; such bracelets are known from the Pre- and Protodynastic Periods down to the New Kingdom. Although no other explanation for its use seems likely, this sharp-edged object cannot have been worn on the wrist with either comfort or convenience. A gold bracelet with overlapping ends is illustrated in G. Brunton, *Qau and Badari I*, Pl. 48, but this, like most of the tortoise-shell

examples, is much more compact in section. In the present case a total of twenty-nine elements of gold and silver, the top and bottom of which are soldered to an inner and outer gold border, form a flat openwork design. With the possible exception of two terminal convolutions of silver wire, apparently representing serpents that occupy both the tapered ends of the bracelet, the orientation of the inserted elements is entirely in one direction. As on several Middle Kingdom objects that show the turtle in a magical context, this animal leads the procession (cf. 82, 84, 88, 89, 95), and its carapace is cross-hatched. Beginning with the turtle, which is made of silver, the twenty-seven elements between the serpents are alternately silver and gold; the others include four wedjat-eyes (𓇧), four vertical dividers, two Hathor emblems (𓇧), four ankh-signs (𓇧), two pairs of running hares, two seated baboons (𓇧), four djed-signs (𓇧), and two falcons. It may well be significant that the turtle's long neck is encircled by the tail(?) of the serpent that precedes it. While these motifs are not wholly characteristic of the magical wands, all are known from the Sixth to Twelfth Dynasty repertory of amulets, including the hare. The hare amulet is couchant rather than courant, as it is here, and its flight is most closely paralleled by the running animals of Queen Aahotpe's necklace (Cairo Cat. 52672), dating to the end of the Second Intermediate Period. One need not assume that the bracelet is equally late, however, for a "flying gallop" is not involved, both pairs of legs being firmly grounded. This piece has a lightness and delicacy that is characteristic of Middle Kingdom metalwork, and it may well belong to that period.

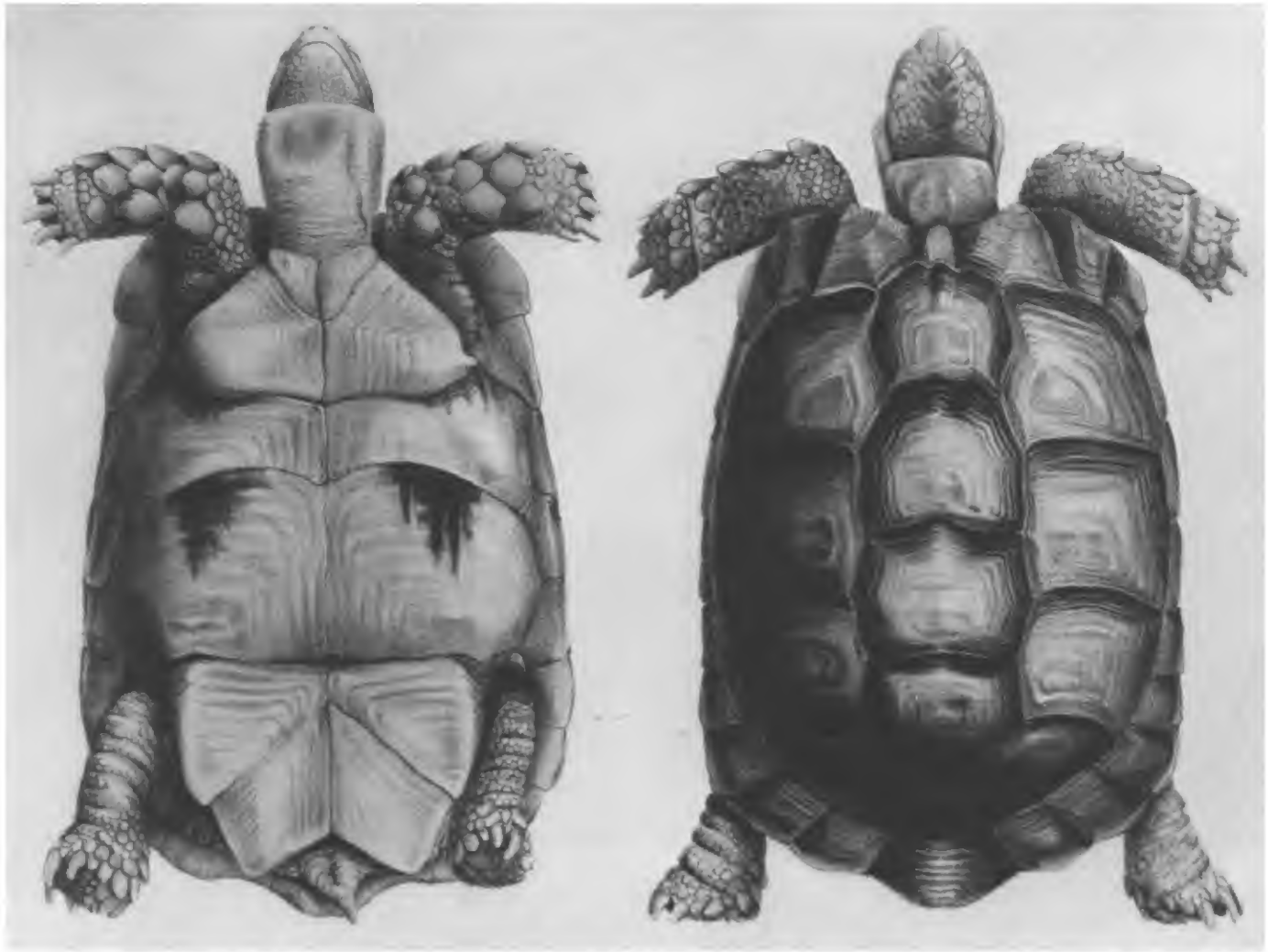


102





*Trionyx triunguis*

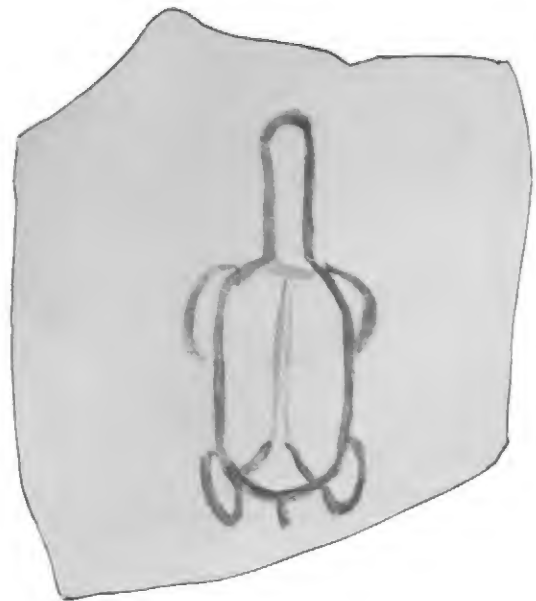


*Testudo kleinmanni*

Predynastic bracelets, MMA 35.7.47-49, Rogers Fund



New Kingdom ostracon from Thebes



Eighteenth Dynasty figurines, BM 50704 and 61416









PLATE 6





29



Archaic limestone gameboard, Berlin



99



100



PLATE 7



Eleventh Dynasty scarabs from the mummy of Wah, MMA 40.3.12-14



Mutilated head of a kneeling statue of Queen Hatshepsut, MMA 29.3.1, Rogers Fund



ABOVE:  
Detail of the back of the  
Metternich stela, MMA  
50.85



Fragment of a reused  
protodynastic palette,  
Cairo J. d'E. 46148





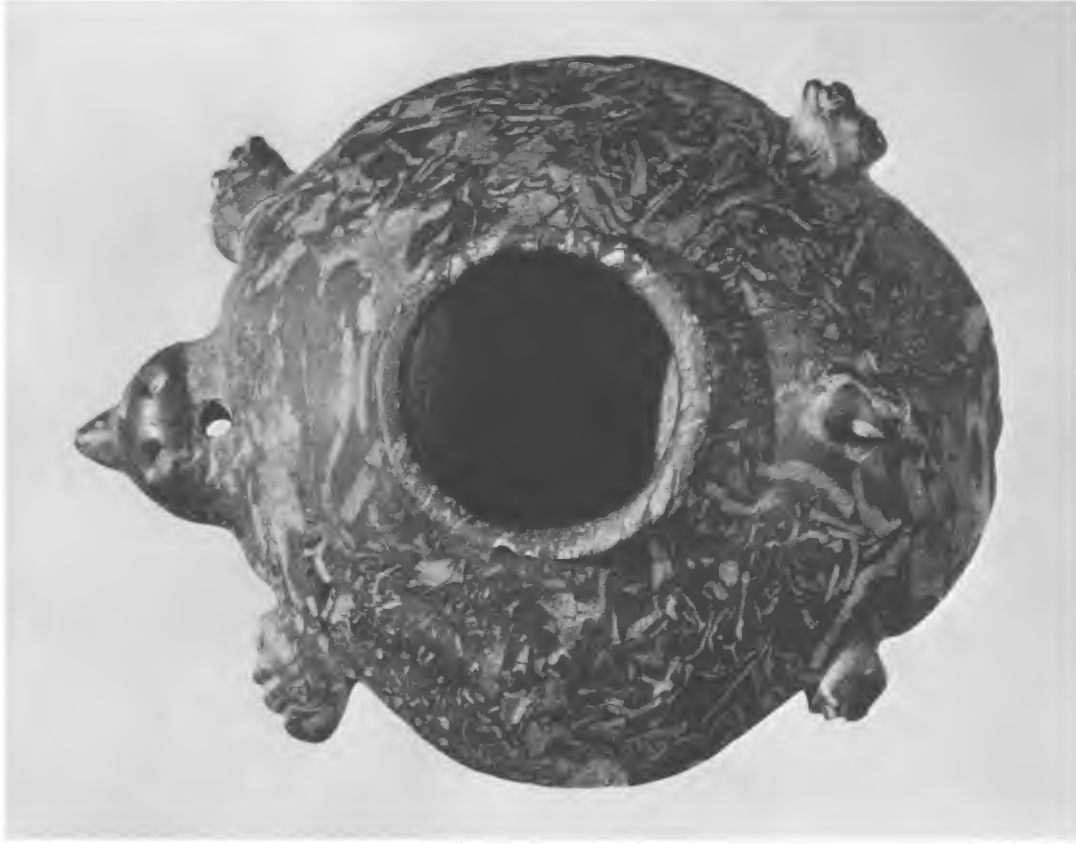
# PLATE 10



3



5









9

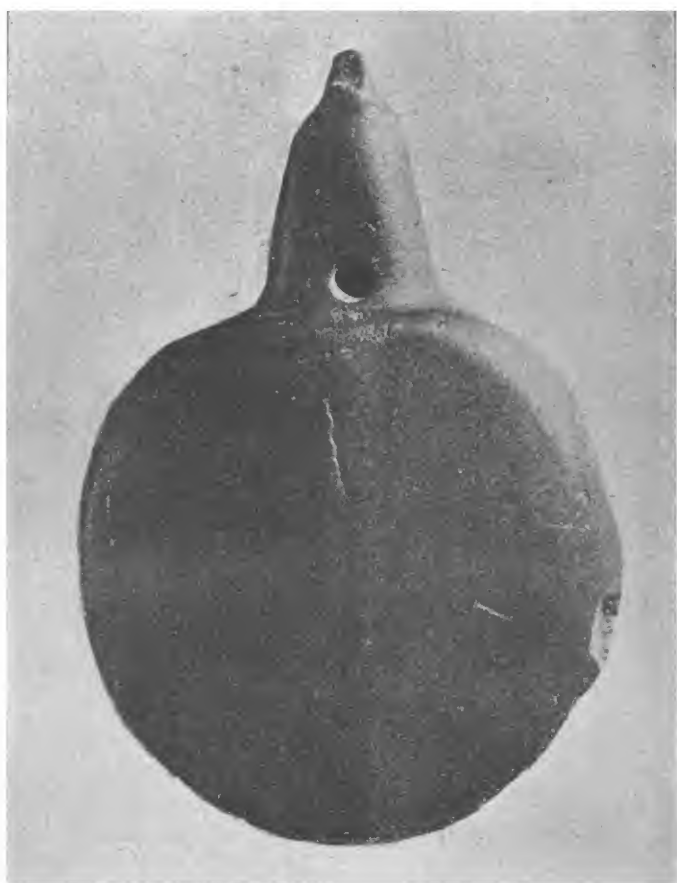


PLATE 13

8



10



12



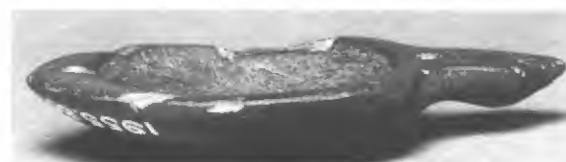
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13

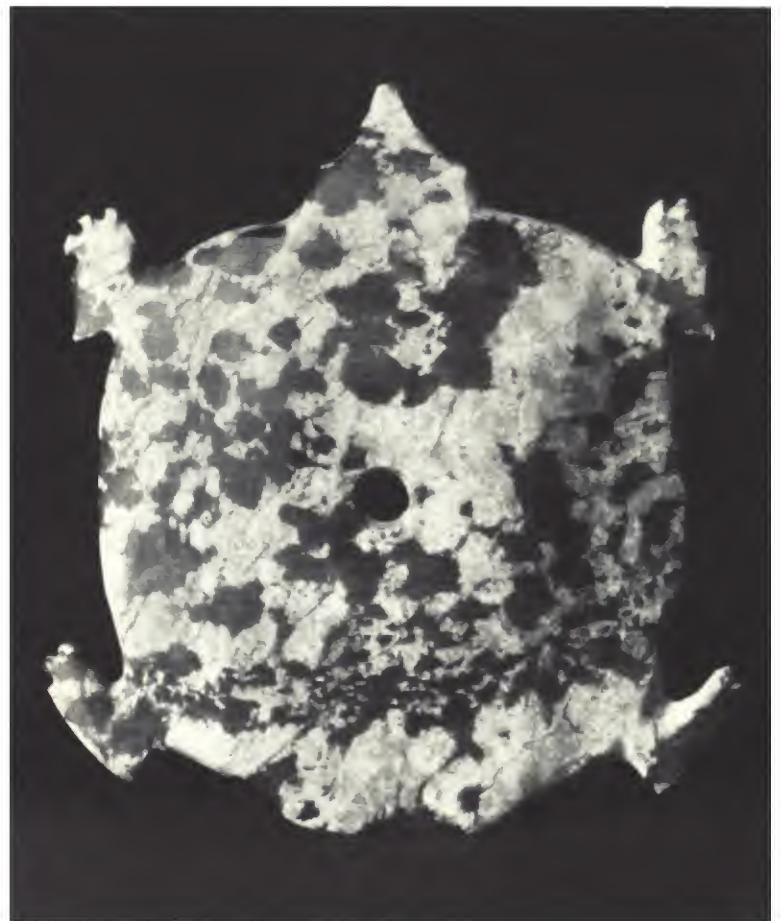


14





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31



MFA 15.247

54



66



68



69

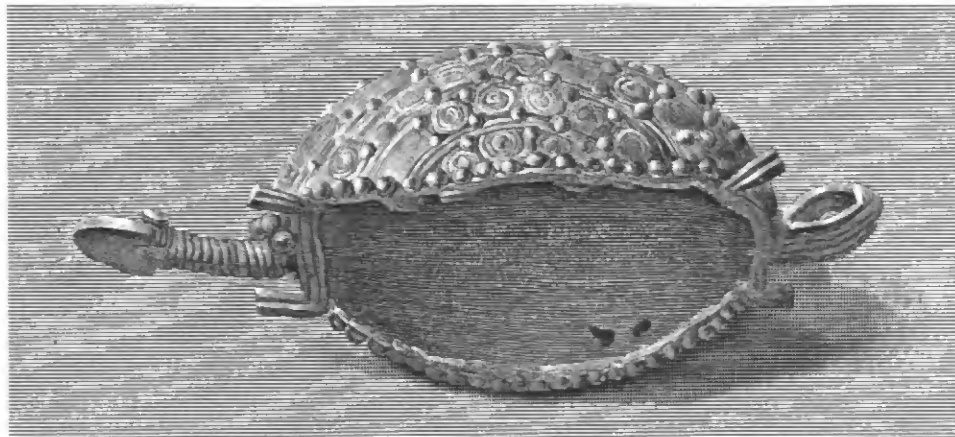
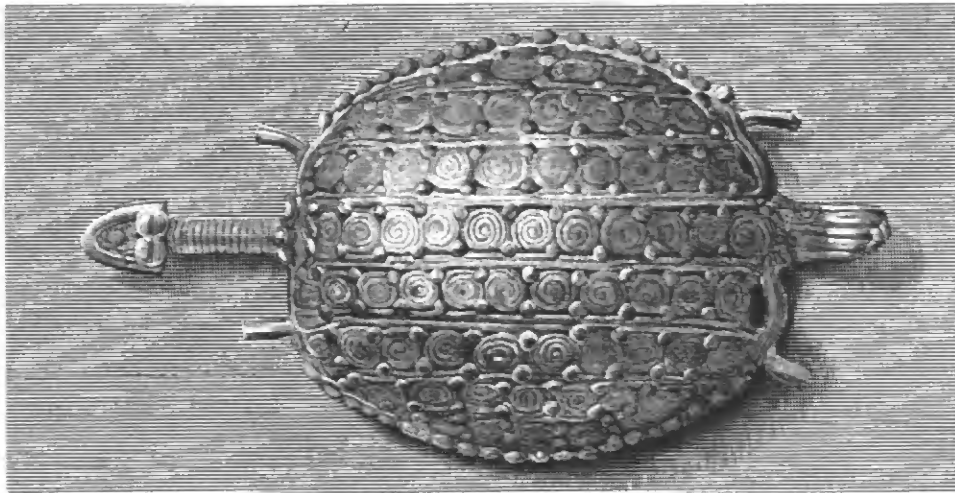


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76

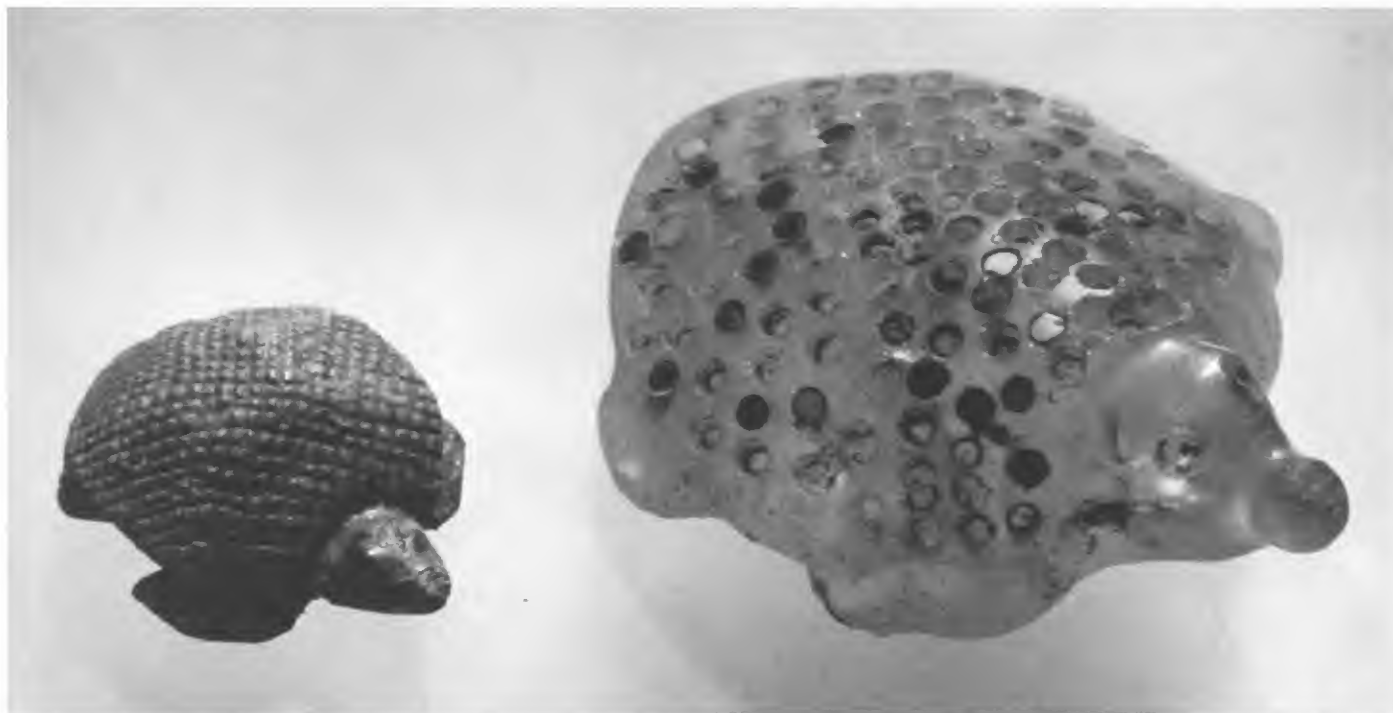




70



Bracelet from the tomb of Tutankhamun, 256 ww



92

55



Magical rod, MMA 26.7.1275 H, with 92 in the center

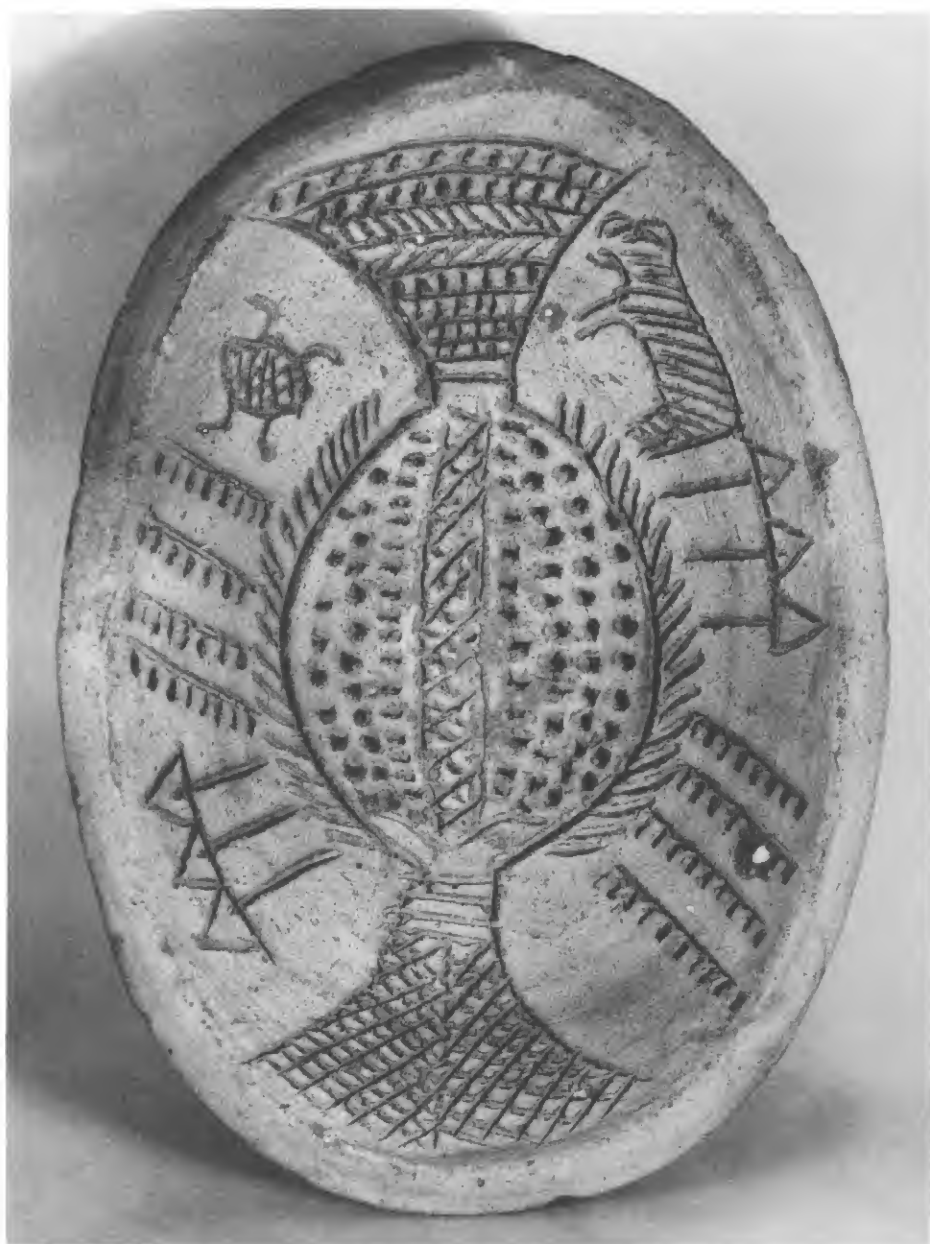
94







95



97



96



Two of the pegs found  
with 96

